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Cook gives pledge on human rights

Ian Black

ROBIN COOK, Britain's new Foreign Secretary, this week committed the Government to "put human rights at the heart of our foreign policy".

Labour's overseas strategy is to have an "ethical dimension" that includes a "responsible" arms trade, pressure on Nigeria to democratise and publication of an annual human rights report, he said.

Outlining ambitious priorities in an unprecedented "mission statement" on Monday, Mr Cook promised a proactive approach to Europe "while resolutely defending British interests", more concern for the environment, and greater efforts on trade promotion.

But it was the emphasis on ethics and human rights that was most striking in his high-profile presentation and an accompanying media offensive designed to maintain the post-election momentum.

"The Labour Government does not accept that political values can be left behind when we check in our passports to travel on diplomatic business," he declared.

His address, in the Foreign Office's ornate Locarno Room, was preceded by pounding music and a slick video. Images of a triumphant Tony Blair outside Downing Street and a collage of scenes from British industry, the arts, defence and technology underlined the message that "in the modern world, foreign policy is not divorced from domestic policy".

Flanked by his junior ministers, and with the head of the diplomatic service, Sir John Coles, looking on, Mr Cook declared: "Our foreign policy must have an ethical dimension and must support the demands of other peoples for the democratic rights on which we insist for ourselves. The Labour Government will put human rights at the heart of our foreign policy."

Britain, as one of the world's four leading defence exporters, would seek responsible international regulation of the arms trade through an eight-point plan that Labour produced in opposition, he said. "In particular, we are going to press for a European Union code of conduct to make sure that if we say 'No, this export is wrong', no other European company then takes up that contract," he told the BBC.

Mr Cook stayed doggedly away from saying whether bans would be imposed on specific countries such as Indonesia or the Gulf states. Officials said later that it would take time to "put flesh on the bones" of the new policy outline.

Labour is pledged not to issue licences for arms sales to regimes "that might use them for repression or international aggression". It was unclear whether the Government would act unilaterally if other countries failed to agree.

Pledging efforts to rebuild the Commonwealth's status, but conspicuously ignoring the lack of international consensus on Nigeria — the single most difficult issue facing the organisation — Mr Cook said: "We believe that the world must keep up very strong pressure, and must be prepared to use economic sanctions in Nigeria, until there is a return to democratic governance."

Mr Blair and fellow Commonwealth heads of government meet in Edinburgh in October, faced with a decision over whether to expel Nigeria, suspended from the organisation after outrage over the hanging of Ken Saro-Wiwa and eight others.

Mr Cook stuck to the line that it was unlikely that Britain would join the first wave of a single European currency. And he insisted that good relations with the United States were a high priority, despite the lack of any specific reference to it in his mission statement.

"I strongly believe that Britain will be a more valuable and a more valued ally of America if we do actually emerge as a leading partner within Europe," the Foreign Secretary told the assembled media.

Hugo Young, page 16



A boy injured in the Iranian earthquake with his family at a shelter in Ardakul city PHOTO:MOHAMAD SAYYA

Rescuers scramble for quake victims

Steven Swindells in Ardakul

VILLAGERS digging with spades and their bare hands pulled out a woman alive from the rubble of her home two days after an earthquake killed about 1,500 people in eastern Iran.

The group of 50 men searching for survivors in the ruins of their mountain hamlet on Monday called for silence after hearing faint cries from under her house flattened by last Saturday's 7.1-force quake.

Having located the voice, the men dug slowly and rescued the badly injured woman named Maryam after a bulldozer supplied by the provincial relief agency removed some of the heavier debris.

But the quake did not spare the young in Ardakul near its epicentre. Sixty students aged between six and 12 died at one school. It also injured nearly 3,000 and flattened 200 villages.

President Akbar Hashemi Rafsanjani cut short a visit to Turkmenistan to visit stricken areas and pledged that the government would help rebuild the villages and construct quake-resistant buildings, Tehran radio said.

Army trucks delivered bags of rice and potatoes to Ardakul, and water tankers also provided relief to dazed residents. Some 50 tents had been set up by the Iranian Red Crescent. In the village of Hadjiabad, soldiers stocked rice bags, potatoes, biscuits and medical supplies in a hangar for distribution in the remote area near the Afghan border.

In Tehran, an Iranian Red Crescent spokesman said rescue workers would comb the quake-stricken areas once more for survivors and bodies before winding up their operations.

United Nations officials in Tehran said rescue and relief efforts were going well but added that more international assistance was needed to replenish the stocks of food. The International Federation of Red Cross and Red Crescent Societies appealed on Monday for more than $8 million to help Iran.

By Tuesday relief workers had set up more than 10,000 tents, and large quantities of food and clothing, as well as 25,000 blankets, had been distributed among survivors, said Rasul Zargar, chief of the interior ministry's headquarters in charge of natural disasters.

Iranian officials have put a cost of $100 million on damage caused by the earthquake, the second major jolt to strike Iran in less than three months. About 1,000 people were killed and 2,600 injured in February when a tremor shook the northwest.

More than 56,000 people have died in earthquakes in Iran since 1957. In 1990, about 35,000 died in the Caspian region. — *Reuter*

● A strong earthquake measuring 6.1 on the Richter scale shook southern Japan's Kyushu island on Tuesday, causing minor damage, authorities said.

Urdu couplets seal jovial meeting of leaders

Suzanne Goldenberg in the Maldives

THE Indian and Pakistani prime ministers emerged jovial and relaxed on Monday from the first summit meeting between the two countries for four years.

The encounter between Inder Kumar Gujral and Nawaz Sharif at the Maldives' Korumba island resort, on the fringe of a regional summit, is likely to encourage the hope that after 50 years the two neighbours can set aside their history of animosity.

The chemistry between them was apparent. They met for more than an hour, exchanging couplets of Urdu poetry, before retiring to a Chinese restaurant.

Although diplomats shied away from describing the talks as a breakthrough, they were greatly cheered by the spirit of the meeting. "We intend to continue with these talks," Mr Sharif told a press conference. "These occasions do not come every day. I have a personal rapport with Mr I K Gujral, whom I met earlier in Islamabad."

Mr Gujral said the two men had agreed on speedy action to secure the exchange of about 400 civilian prisoners, mainly fishermen who strayed outside territorial waters and people who overstayed visas. "Let's start on a clean slate," he said.

The two men did discuss the region's most intractable dispute — Kashmir, which has been the cause of two wars, and where Pakistan has supported an uprising against New Delhi's rule — but they focused on less contentious areas and confidence-building measures: a civilian hotline, relaxation in visa procedures, and more humane treatment of diplomats, who are often harassed or beaten when suspected of spying.

Diplomats said there was also scope for increasing trade between the two countries — only $115 million in 1995-96, although smuggled contraband amounted to $500 million. They suggested that northern India, which suffers from acute electricity shortages, could buy power from Pakistan.

Although there were few concrete results, the diplomats said that the leaders had laid the foundation for bettering relations by instructing officials to identify key areas to be addressed.

Austria	AS30	Malta	50c
Belgium	BF75	Netherlands	G 4.75
Denmark	DK16	Norway	NK 16
Finland	FM 10	Portugal	E300
France	FF 13	Saudi Arabia	SR 6.50
Germany	DM 4	Spain	P 300
Greece	DR 450	Sweden	SK 19
Italy	L 3,000	Switzerland	SF 3.30

Lessons to be learnt from defeat and victory

THE Conservatives are now going to spend the next few months analysing why they were defeated so resoundingly. I can save them the time.

They were defeated because they did not listen to the people of Britain, while Tony Blair and Labour did. Their policies were "We know what's good for you" rather than "Tell us your problems and let us find a solution together". On May 1 the country shouted loud enough for the Conservatives to hear. Unfortunately for them, it was too late.
Andrew Walkden,
Horwich, Bolton

IN ALL the excitement about the parliamentary landslide, it should be remembered that by far the biggest swing was from voters to non-voters. The abstentionists increased by more than 30 per cent to nearly 29 per cent of the electorate — not counting the unknown number who aren't on the electoral register — and reached the highest level since the second world war.

As a result, Tony Blair, like every other prime minister since the war, despite winning so many seats, won the votes of less than a third of the electorate; John Major won less than a quarter, and all other parties won less than a fifth.

The abstentionists are now the second political grouping in the country, and in the coming debates it should be remembered that a large and growing minority of the community reject all the parliamentary parties. "Don't vote" doesn't mean "Don't care". It means "Don't agree" and "Want something different".
Nicolas Walter,
London

PARALLELS between the Labour victory and King Arthur's triumph at Mount Badon, 1,400 or so years ago, come easily to mind. After all it was the Angles and Saxons of the Southeast who were meant to be protecting the country but were raiding the nation's family silver and taking Britain out of Europe instead. Arthur united the fractious British heartlands by hope of a new Britain, a truly United Kingdom. But we should not forget that Camelot was destroyed by factionalism.

Let us hope that the spectre of a revived Tory party, feeding on misguided ambition, will keep the Labour party dutifully united into the next millennium.
Michael Shackleton,
Kobe, Japan

A GENERAL election has just taken place, and the Labour party has roundly defeated the incumbent Tory government. Led by a young and charismatic lawyer, and unencumbered by the baggage of recent government, it has stormed the Treasury benches, promising to utilise its considerable majority in the House to design and implement a new and radical politics. Formally committed to a national referendum on proportional representation, the Labour victory represents a watershed in the nation's political history and a considerable weight of public expectation rests upon the shoulders of a talented and energetic cabinet.

Britain, May 1997? Actually, no: New Zealand, July 1984.

Among other things, New Zealand Labour used its parliamentary majority to deregulate and liberalise the economy, reduce state provision of goods and services, and to engage on a major programme of state asset privatisation. In brief, it behaved in a very un-Labour-like manner, and in so doing took rather a lot of us completely by surprise.

Inevitably, perhaps, Labour's electoral chickens came home to roost; at the 1990 general election the party was demolished by the National opposition, and has not had so much as a whiff of government since.

The challenge for Mr Blair, if he does wish to give effect to a reformist agenda, will lie in managing and mobilising that huge majority in the House. The challenge for the rest of you, I suspect, will have to do with coming to terms with the "New" in "New Labour".
Richard Shaw,
Palmerston North, New Zealand

ON ELECTION night, as the polls were closing, I rushed out to get some bubbly — only to find that as the streets of London were swinging to Labour, not a drop of fizzy could be bought for love nor money as stocks had been snapped up. Champagne socialism is here at last.
Delyth Morgan,
London

NOW that so many Tory MPs are going to spend more time with their families, the morals of the country should improve tremendously.
Carla Singh,
Sunderland

NEIL Hamilton cannot claim Unemployment Benefit as his own party abolished it in October 1996. He may be entitled to Job Seeker's Allowance for six months, but only if he can satisfy the Benefits Agency that he did not lose his last job as a result of gross misconduct.
Samantha Harney,
Reading Community Welfare Rights Unit, Reading, Berkshire

Zambia counts its debt in death

I WRITE this out of sheer frustration and at times a few tears. Perhaps it will be therapeutic. I am a doctor, running a district hospital in Zambia's Northwest province, its poorest region. We have received no government grants to run the hospital for six months, and it is our daily experience to see the deaths of people, mainly children, from diseases of poverty: malnutrition, measles, diarrhoea, etc.

Nothing dramatic or catastrophic, just the consistent passing away of life in a steadily increasing flow.

The government says it has no money, and I tend to believe it. Zambia has a massive foreign debt, and what little wealth the country has is given back to the creditors in the West to pay off interest on loans given under previous governments.

Zambia has no civil war, no overt racial or intertribal hatred, a stable, democratically elected government, a free capital market and an independent judiciary.

All the ideals that the West holds on to and desires to see in the rest of the world. Yet the rich creditors still hold them by the proverbial puppet strings. I do not desire handouts, donations or grants. This would only increase dependency. But surely the time has come to release Zambia and other nations from their bondage and give them a chance to address their own issues with their own finances, without sucking the marrow out of their economy. Then, perhaps, we will see our grant.

Which Western government has the courage to exercise this power and wipe the slate of international debt clean? Or do they wish to hold on to the paternalistic power of monetary debt to keep these former colonies under control?

I watch the people here, those at the bottom of the economic food chain, and those furthest away from the world of the Dow Jones, FTSE, and BHP shares, being slowly leached of their health and, who knows, maybe their hope. Do Western governments care about the end-point of their policies as seen in this obscure part of the world?
(Dr) Trevor Smith,
Mukinge Hospital, Kasempa, Zambia

Europe dances to different tune

WHAT is the tune to which all parties and politicians now dance? It is to turn money into more money for moneylenders and investors.

What is the way to ensure that all of Europe stays in step? It is to have a single money-regime whose terms dictate that all nations strip down their social sectors to better serve corporate stockholders.

What is a people and a country when all that exists is to serve the sequence of money becoming more money for those with money?

France's President, Jacques Chirac, declares the new destiny of nations in a stirring annunciation of the new order (Chirac calls snap poll over Europe, April 27). "The French people," he proclaims, "must express themselves clearly on the scale and speed of change over the next five years if we want to affirm ourselves as a great economic and political power equal to the dollar and the yen."

When one of the world's leading cultural centres announces its final purpose is to increase the power of its money, we know that a moral insanity has invaded the heart of civilisation.
(Prof) John McMurtry,
Guelph, Ontario, Canada

I SUPPOSE the Guardian prints letters by people like Martin Carr (May 4) only in order to get some outraged responses from other readers. I don't understand anything about the need for or the opposition to the European common currency, but is not it the definition of racism to make blanket statements about entire populations — "Germany and France, whose populations are blatantly xenophobic"?

Also, "let's encourage those traits we were known so well for – fair play, decency, and acceptance of other races". This choice of vocabulary only reminds me of Newspeak in George Orwell's 1984: deny reality by calling it the exact opposite of what it is, as can testify the Maoris, the Aborigines, the American Indians, the people of the Indian subcontinent, and many others who have suffered so much from this so-called fair play, decency and acceptance of other races.

No wonder Christianity is in such bad shape if people like Martin Carr are nominated archbishops. What kind of spiritual guidance can they offer? One can only wonder.
Genevieve Navarre-Halse,
Tokyo, Japan

Briefly

I REALLY hope that Paul Brown's article (BNFL given maximum fine, April 13) was written tongue-in-cheek and deliberately failed to question *why* millions of gallons of radioactive water a day are being carried across a neglected pipeline and discharged into the Irish Sea.

The state of the bridge and the possible repercussions arising from its potential collapse are of far less concern than the state of the oceans. BNFL being shown to be irresponsible in its maintenance operations is irrelevant compared to the total lack of regard for the environment.

The "maximum fine" of $32,000 plus costs of $6,200 amounts to nothing more than a slap on the wrist for a large business, and demonstrates how unconscious we are to the true significance of our actions as we poison ourselves in our own effluent.
Richard Borthwick,
Vancouver, BC, Canada

ONE HAS to question the logic of Russia's selling and licensing some of the world's most advanced military technology and nuclear know-how to Beijing (China exploits competition for arms trade, April 27). Considering its track record on disregarding human rights, and its more recent manipulation of European and North American governments and corporations, one must also wonder why China should have such technology. On top of that, one must question French, Italian, and US desires to secure similar contracts with China.
Bruce Freshy,
Abbotsford, BC, Canada

ROY Greenslade's article, "Why press freedom is no laughing matter" (May 4) could be extended to include a modern version of press control which is epitomised in New Zealand. Almost all of New Zealand's newsprint is supplied from one paper mill. The New Zealand press does not report the dirtier details of the pollution this mill creates while manufacturing its newsprint, thereby implying censorship by industrial muscle.
Reuben Cohen,
Bay of Plenty, New Zealand

LE MONDE says Rostropovich was the darling of the great and the good (April 20). Was Imelda Marcos one of the great or one of the good?
John Orford,
Misamis Oriental, Philippines

WILLIAM Cookson argues that factory farming is more obscene than (sport?) hunting (April 27). But is to be cruel for profit more obscene than to be cruel for fun?
Henry Holgate,
Halifax, Nova Scotia, Canada

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ANC apologises but defends 'just war'

David Beresford in Johannesburg

THE AFRICAN National Congress on Monday defended its moral conduct of a "just war" against apartheid while admitting to the torture and execution of dissidents and spies, and the widespread sexual abuse of female cadres in guerrilla training camps.

It disclosed that it had plotted the murder of the Zulu leader, Chief Mangosuthu Buthelezi, but said the conspiracy had been overruled by the leadership.

It conceded the use of torture and admitted planting mines on rural roads, but said that these were designed to minimise casualties among black labourers. The ANC also confessed to killing civilians in urban bomb attacks, but blamed technical blunders for the extent of the deaths.

"We have nothing to hide," Nelson Mandela's heir apparent, Deputy President Thabo Mbeki, told Archbishop Desmond Tutu's Truth and Reconciliation Commission in Cape Town.

The ANC said 22 of its members had been executed in the camps in exile for offences including mutiny, betrayal, rape and murder.

Commissioner Howard Vally asked the ANC delegation if it felt the torture of suspected spies was justified.

"As a recipient of [state] torture in 1964, I could never justify the use of torture," the transport minister, Mac Maharaj, told the commission. The man responsible for the camps — the security department head, Mzwai Pillso — had been sacked and the national commissar, Andrew Masondo, had been censured.

The defence minister, Joe Modise, acknowledged that women combatants had been sexually harassed and abused. "The ANC took steps to correct this; it was a very serious problem," he said.

But challenged as to why ANC personnel implicated in the camps' scandal were subsequently given senior government positions, the ANC said: "To continue punishing these officials endlessly would be contrary to humane practice."

On the ANC's feud with Inkatha, in which 15,000 people died between 1985 and 1995, Mr Mbeki said his party had taken only defensive action, "not against Inkatha but against warlords" paid by the apartheid government to foment conflict.

Meanwhile hopes of prising open the secrecy surrounding the South African military's role in the "dirty war" against the ANC received a lift when members of a sinister army assassination unit joined the last-minute stampede to apply for amnesty from the commission.

Almost 8,000 applications for amnesty had been received by the commission when the deadline elapsed last Saturday.

The applicants included Mr Mbeki, at least two members of the present cabinet and two National Party former ministers.

Notable among those who failed to apply were the last two apartheid-era presidents, P W Botha and F W de Klerk, who thereby become liable to criminal prosecution if evidence can be found of illegal activities on their part.

Perhaps the most intriguing submissions to reach the commission were from members of the Civilian Co-operation Bureau, an assassination squad run by the military on corporate lines. They are reported to include the "managing director" of the CCB, Joe Verster, who has in the past tried to blackmail the National Party by threatening to disclose the organisation's covert activities — believed to have included assassinations in Europe.

Chief Buthelezi has refused to go before the commission. He snubbed Bishop Tutu last week, ridiculing as "theatrics" a proposal that he and other political leaders should visit the sites of apartheid-era atrocities and ask publicly for forgiveness. The chief, a vocal critic of the inquiry into atrocities, insisted that he had already apologised "before the whole world" for acts of violence by his Inkatha Freedom Party.

Hague trial finds Bosnian Serb guilty

Ian Traynor in Bonn

THE first international war crimes trial since Nuremberg last week convicted a a Bosnian Serb of crimes against humanity. But despite the prosecution team's two-year attempt to nail Dusan Tadic on nine counts of murdering 13 people, the court acquitted him on all murder charges.

Human rights organisations hailed the verdict as a milestone. Tadic was found guilty of beating and torturing Muslim inmates in the notorious Serb detention camps of northwest Bosnia in the summer of 1992.

The International War Crimes Tribunal in The Hague, in its first full trial, convicted Tadic, aged 41, a former Serb police reservist and cafe proprietor, on 11 of the 31 counts he faced.

He was found to have played a part in almost all of the assaults on prisoners described by camp survivors during the one-year trial. But the three judges, headed by Gabrielle Kirk McDonald of the United States, cleared him of the most infamous charge: of murdering a Muslim prisoner by forcing another inmate to bite off his testicles.

The incident occurred in Omarska, one of a network of camps in the Banja Luka region of Bosnia where hardline Serbs instituted a reign of terror.

Tadic, dressed in a pink shirt and a dark suit, stood flanked by two policemen while Judge McDonald read a summary of the 301-page verdict. He took occasional notes and betrayed barely a flicker of emotion before being returned to his cell pending sentencing on July 1.

Christian Chartier, the tribunal's spokesman, described the verdict as "a judicial condemnation" of the Serbs' racist persecution policy in Bosnia.

Bosnian Muslim refugees in Germany, who had Tadic arrested after spotting him in Munich in 1994, described him as "the butcher of Omarska".

War veterans embrace at the Tomb of the Unknown Soldier in Moscow during Red Square celebrations last week to mark the 1945 defeat of Nazi Germany
PHOTOGRAPH: VLADIMIR NOVIKOV

Nazi gold report criticises Switzerland

Richard Norton-Taylor

SWITZERLAND'S "business as usual" attitude towards Nazi Germany, including trade in gold looted by the Third Reich, had the clear effect of prolonging the second world war, according to a United States government report published last week.

"In the unique circumstances of World War II, neutrality collided with morality; too often, being neutral provided a pretext for avoiding moral considerations," said Stuart Eizenstat, the under-secretary of commerce, who compiled the 200-page report. He said that Switzerland and other neutral countries "ignored repeated Allied entreaties to end their dealings with Nazi Germany".

"Whatever their motivation, the fact that they pursued vigorous trade with the Third Reich had the clear effect of supporting and prolonging Nazi Germany's capacity to wage war," he added. "Most inexplicable," he said, was the persistence of a "business as usual attitude by Switzerland".

The report criticises the US for not pushing Switzerland hard enough at the end of the war to account for and return the gold it had acquired in deals with the Nazis. "There was a demonstrable lack of senior-level support for a tough US negotiating position with the neutrals," the report said.

Robert Schwartz, a former US treasury official involved in recovering looted gold from Portugal in 1946, said his bosses told him to "back off". He said the US military was worried about renegotiating the lease of a US air force base in the Azores. "As the cold war was developing, the rivalry between the Soviet Union and the US eclipsed all other concerns in this period," Mr Schwartz added.

The report also said that British diplomats told US officials that giving money as restitution to Jewish refugees would "interfere" with Britain's post-war Palestine policy.

The study — which drew on more than 15 million documents, some declassified for the first time — provides conclusive proof that gold, jewellery, coins and melted-down dental fillings from concentration camp victims were taken by the Germans, mixed with plundered bank gold and resmelted into bars that were traded abroad.

But the report found no evidence that neutral countries such as Switzerland knowingly accepted tainted gold.

Between January 1939 and June 30, 1945, Germany transferred $400 million — about $3.8 billion in today's terms — worth of looted gold to the Swiss National Bank as part of what the report calls "one of the greatest thefts by a government in history".

● The British Foreign Office admitted for the first time last week that some looted Nazi gold deposited in the Bank of England after the war could have been taken from Jewish victims of concentration camps.

The Week

PRESIDENT Clinton assured leaders at a Central American summit that he would not allow the deportation of up to 300,000 of the region's illegal immigrants under a new US law. But he rejected any suggestion of amnesty.
Washington Post, page 19

DELMAR Simpson, the United States army staff sergeant convicted of 18 counts of rape involving six female trainees at the Aberdeen military base in Maryland, was sentenced to 25 years in prison.

THE International Campaign For Tibet denounced China for jailing Chadrel Rinpoche, a monk, for six years for colluding with the Dalai Lama in the search for the reincarnation of the Panchen Lama, the region's second-holiest cleric.

A SPECIAL commission set up by the Kremlin in an attempt to improve the status of Russian women is to be headed by a man.

MORE than 3,000 Honduran Indians staged a hunger strike outside the president's residence in Tegucigalpa to press for land rights and the results of an inquiry into the deaths of two of their leaders.

UP TO 100,000 demonstrators massed near Istanbul's Blue Mosque to protest against army plans to stop younger children going to Islamic schools.

JAPAN sacked its ambassador to Peru, Morihisa Aoki, forcing him to give up his post to take the blame for the lengthy hostage siege at his residence in Lima.

SRI Lankan troops launched an offensive against separatist Tamil rebels in the north of the island to open a land route to a strategic government-held Jaffna town, military officials said.

EIGHT self-styled independence fighters for the Most Serene Republic of Venice were arrested after seizing the bell tower in St Mark's square.
Washington Post, page 20

POPE John Paul II celebrated mass in front of 300,000 people in Martyrs Square in the Lebanese capital, Beirut.

TIMOTHY McVEIGH believed he would spark a "general uprising" by planting the Oklahoma City bomb, the prosecution's star witness told the trial in Denver.

SUSIE MARONEY, an Australian, braved sharks and currents to become the first person officially to swim from Cuba to Florida — a distance of 120 miles.

Sweatshop labour tarnishes football

Sarah Boseley

FOOTBALLS bearing the Manchester United club crest and a picture of Eric Cantona are being made by child labourers in India working for as little as 4 cents an hour.

A report by Christian Aid in Britain reveals that child labour is regularly used in the production of a wide range of sports goods. More of these goods, $21 million worth, go to Britain than anywhere else.

In one case singled out by the report, A Sporting Chance, Sonia, a blind girl aged 11, was found stitching souvenir footballs with the United Crest in a back courtyard in India's Punjab state.

Although the balls could be feeding the huge counterfeit market, the report says those stitched by Sonia looked genuine. Footballs identical to the one she was making are on sale at the Manchester United shop for $16.

Manchester United this week denied that its official footballs were being manufactured using child labour. The club director and solicitor, Maurice Watkins, said: "The club requires undertakings from all its suppliers not to use child labour."

Christian Aid says children as young as seven stitch footballs for sale in the UK, while boys of 10 are employed in small workshops making boxing and cricket gloves for export. Working with the South Asian Coalition on Child Servitude, Christian Aid researchers found that tanneries supplying leather to some of the main sports goods companies exporting to Britain were employing children illegally in hazardous conditions.

The report says there may be up to 30,000 children working in India's sports goods industry. Some of the work they do — sewing all day in bad light, hunched over their work — can damage their health. It is even more likely to affect their education, ensuring that they remain in poverty.

Christian Aid wants to see British retailers and importers working with manufacturers to improve pay and conditions for adults while phasing out child labour.

"A consumer boycott or switching suppliers is not the answer because lost business could mean lost jobs for adults and could drive vulnerable children into more dangerous and degrading work," said Martin Cottingham, author of the report. "Big companies like Mitre, Umbro and Adidas have the money and the muscle to persuade their suppliers to implement codes of conduct pledging basic minimum labour standards."

The report tells the story of Sonia, who stitches footballs bearing the picture of Eric Cantona, a replica of his signature, the club crest and the words "Eric the King". Because Sonia is blind, her aunt sits beside her, handing her the panels the right way up. "There's no fun in it, but I have no choice," Sonia said.

The report says: "The involvement of children as young as seven in stitching footballs is not uncommon."

Sonia works four or five hours a day, earning about 40 cents for two finished balls. She is the family's only regular wage earner.

In another example, Pintu, aged 12, worked six hours a day for two years at a tannery, helping his father earn $2 a day. He has since been released. The Supreme Court has classified the tannery as a hazardous working environment where children should not be employed.

Christian Aid hopes that British sports goods manufacturers will follow the example of US companies, which acted following public pressure. They supported a plan to phase out child labour in Sialkot, Pakistan, while safeguarding families' income.

The new Reebok football, which will shortly be appearing in British shops, will have a panel that reads: "Guarantee: manufactured without child labour."



Sonia, aged 11, is blind. She is paid 20c for each ball she stitches

Cocktail of drugs offers hope on Aids

Tim Radford

AMERICAN scientists last week predicted that a cocktail of drugs could, over three years, eliminate the HIV-1 virus from all known hiding places in the body.

The prediction is based on the dramatic clearance of the virus from the blood of eight newly infected patients in an eight-week treatment of three drugs in combination.

The scientists are based at the Aaron Diamond Aids Research Centre in New York, one of the frontline laboratories in the battle against Aids. They wrote in Nature magazine: "Our results have direct implications for the possibility of eradicating HIV-1 from an infected person."

In a separate development, an international team, whose results were published in Science magazine, reported that almost 100 per cent of HIV had disappeared from blood and lymph tissues of 34 HIV-positive people after six months of treatment with a slightly different mix of drugs.

The US scientists, led by Dr David Ho, say their calculations suggest that drugs treatment lasting between 2.3 and 3.1 years might stop the virus altogether.

They warn of the need for new strategies to cope with viral "embers" that might rekindle. They also try to limit the hopes they raise. "Although significant progress has been made in the past year in the treatment of HIV-1 infection, it would be wrong to believe we are close to a cure for Aids. However, the recent advances in treatment and pathogenesis do warrant a close examination of the feasibility of eradicating HIV-1 from an infected person."

HIV is a retrovirus that smuggles itself into the body's immune system and then hijacks the cell machinery to copy itself. It copies itself clumsily, making mistakes and changing its coat so that the human immune system fails to recognise the new versions.

A few years ago, only one drug — AZT or zidovudine — seemed to work at all, but it had toxic side-effects and did not work for long.

In the past year, researchers have identified the "trap door" that the virus uses to enter the immune system cells and have started to talk of a drug to "lock it out".

The Aaron Diamond team looked at the blood of patients on a triple therapy of AZT, lamivudine and nelfinavir. In the first two weeks, concentration of "free" HIV-1 in the blood dropped by 99 per cent. The second phase of decline was much slower, but at the end of eight weeks the virus was almost undetectable. If the virus count was still going down after 40 days, then it might be possible to eliminate it altogether within two to three years, they reasoned.

The international team of researchers in the US, the Netherlands and the UK reported in Science that a slightly different triple therapy almost completely cleared the virus from both blood and lymphoid tissues of 34 patients over six months of treatment.

But they also warned that it would need further study to see whether it would be possible to purge the virus — or whether some sort of drug treatment would have to be maintained for life. This raises yet another problem: cost. The drugs in the New York experiment cost $20,000.

Chechens sign 'fig-leaf' treaty

David Hearst in Moscow

TO WIDESPREAD scepticism, President Boris Yeltsin signed a four-paragraph peace treaty with the leader of separatist Chechenia, Aslan Maskhadov, claiming to be putting an end to 400 years of hostilities between their two peoples.

Mr Yeltsin, the loser of a bloody 21-month military campaign that ended in the unconditional withdrawal of his troops, called the joint declaration historic. He added, as though he had played no part in it: "Some kind of war was going on throughout this period and the people felt insecure."

Mr Maskhadov, a former Soviet colonel who led the military resistance, said the confrontation had been ended "regardless of those who wanted it to continue". The reference was to Mr Yeltsin's interior minister, Anatoli Kulikov, who was conveniently inspecting troops in Vladivostok the day the Chechen leader was in town.

The agreement, signed in the Kremlin, bound Russia to maintain relations with Chechenia "in accordance with the generally recognised principles and norms of international law" — a phrase that caused tremors in the 88 other subjects of the Russian Federation.

While Chechenia claims independence, Russia maintains it is part of its federation. The two sides have agreed to put off consideration of the republic's status till 2001.

Mr Yeltsin's press secretary, Sergei Yastrzhembsky, quickly issued a statement claiming the phrase had more a "moral-political character than a juridical one".

In reality, commentators said, both presidents needed the joint statement as a fig-leaf for other agreements to get oil flowing through the 160km pipeline that runs through the rebel state.

Mr Maskhadov's authority over his Chechen field commanders has recently been challenged by two terrorist bombings of railway stations in southern Russia and a series of kidnappings of foreign and Russian journalists in Chechenia.

After failing to induce Saudi Arabia and other Arab states to recognise Chechenia, Mr Maskhadov had little option but to turn to Russia for money to rebuild the republic's shattered economy. He insists that Russia must start paying pensions in the republic before the oil will flow.

Russia desperately wants the pipeline to work. It will be used to take early oil from Azerbaijan to the Russian port of Novorossiysk.

Yuri Dubrovin, the legal expert of the nationalities committee of the Russian state Duma, said: "The agreement is a fig-leaf for both Chechenia and Russia. Without it Russia can't give money."

Raids humble Mafia clan

John Hooper in Rome

ITALIAN investigators claim to have foiled an attempt to relaunch Sicily's leading, and most pitilessly violent, Cosa Nostra "family", the Corleonesi.

It was announced last week that the police netted 11 members and associates of the group in a secret operation. Among those arrested was Mario Grizzaffi, a nephew of Salvatore Riina, the "boss of bosses" whose capture four years ago marked the start of the Corleonesi's decline.

Mr Grizzaffi, aged 31, was said to have taken part in a series of underworld "summits" after his uncle's detention. Riina's 21-year-old son Giovanni is also thought to have attended several of the meetings. But the police said Mr Grizzaffi was the more senior of the two, implying that but for the operation he could have emerged as the new leader of Sicily's most feared criminal clan.

The mafiosi of Corleone, an agricultural town near Palermo, began their rise to the top of Cosa Nostra after a five-year "civil war" that began in 1958 and claimed more than 140 victims. It was this horrific struggle that provided the inspiration for episodes in Mario Puzo's novel The Godfather, which was later used as the basis for Francis Ford Coppola's films of the same name.

The Corleonesi went on to take over Palermo, the Sicilian Mafia's power base, in another round of butchery in the early 1980s.

Their spell of dominance was characterised by contempt for the rules that once gave Cosa Nostra an air of shady dignity, and by a mistaken belief that they could take on the Italian state and win. Riina ordered a succession of assassinations of leading public figures, culminating in 1992 in the murder of judges Giovanni Falcone and Paolo Borsellino, appointed to bring the Mafia to justice.

Since then the Corleonesi has fallen on hard times: Riina was betrayed by his driver; two of his fugitive lieutenants, Leoluca Bagarella and Giovanni Brusca, were picked up in 1995 and 1996 respectively; and his son is beginning a 56-month jail sentence for being a member of Cosa Nostra.

In recent months investigators have begun to strike at the the clan's economic power base. An accountant believed to have had a key role in marshalling its finances has been arrested and assets worth about $72 million have been confiscated.

Dishing the dirt

CONAKRY DIARY
Claudia McElroy

GUINEA'S capital has been trying hard in recent months to live up to its name: the garden city. Derided as the dirtiest city in West Africa, Conakry's municipal authorities have been battling to purge it of the insalubrity that threatens the 1 million population with cholera and other diseases.

But now the mountains of putrescence lining the streets and stagnant pools of sewage from blocked drains have disappeared, carted off by council workers to unknown destinations. Stall-holders and street vendors have been press-ganged into helping with the clean-up effort, part of a year-long campaign of health and sanitation education.

The task of disposing of 600 tons of waste every day is not a simple one: while some of it is burned, most is merely redistributed, dumped on waste ground outside the city limits. Slowly the tide of rubbish is accumulating again, making even more onerous the challenge of improving the run-down metropolis.

Nowhere can the non-fulfilment of Conakry's aspirations of grandeur be better seen than at the former presidential palace. Built, along with 50 Moorish-style villas, to host the conference of the Organisation of African Unity in 1984 (an event cancelled due to the sudden death of the Marxist "father of the nation" Sekou Touré), and then used as the office of President General Lansana Conté, the building is now dilapidated — targeted last year in an army mutiny that almost toppled the presidency.

You can see the charred remains of roof joists, masonry mortar-holed, shards of glass in windows, and weed-choked grounds that are now home to several hundred vultures.

A solitary dumpster near the main gate can't contain the waste produced by the adjacent market-stalls. Children defy the acrid smell to scavenge in the overflow of rubbish, emerging occasionally with some "prize".

Sceptics gloat over the apparent futility of the government's clean-up efforts. "They . . . don't know how to go about solving problems," says one leading member of the opposition coalition.

Referring to the anti-corruption task force set up by the government last year, he says: "There have been no arrests and no sanctions. You can't keep sweeping dirt under the carpet forever and expect it not to create a bad smell."

This politician is pessimistic about the future of a country which, he says, despite having democratic institutions, continues to be run as a dictatorship. He laments what he sees as the sad paradox that is Guinea: that while the country is sitting on huge potential mineral wealth it continues to be one of the poorest in the world.

Looking at the vultures hovering over what was supposed to be the showpiece of the nation, one can see what he means.

Computer leaves Kasparov blue

Mark Tran in New York

DEEP BLUE, the supercomputer that can examine 200 million chess moves a second, last Sunday scored a historic triumph when it demolished Garry Kasparov, the world champion, in the sixth and final game of their "man versus machine" rematch.

The end came surprisingly quickly as Kasparov stalked from the table in disgust on the 18th move, one hour after the start. His resignation was a crushing end to his efforts to maintain human supremacy over computers in chess.

"It was over after game two. The computer was beyond my understanding and I was scared," he told a post-match press conference in New York.

The final score was 3½ points for the computer and 2½ points for Kasparov.

The world chess champion looked unhappy early on, shaking and clutching his head as if in despair. He adopted a risky strategy, trying to trick Deep Blue in what experts called an unbalanced game, but his strategy misfired spectacularly. He has the consolation of $400,000 for the loser's purse. A win would have netted him $700,000.

Kasparov won the first game last week, but has been unhappy ever since as he tried to overcome a Deep Blue much improved by its programmers since his 4-2 victory in their first match a year ago in Philadelphia.

When Kasparov beat IBM's chess computer in 1989, he arrogantly told the programmers to "teach it to resign earlier". Last Sunday, though, the world champion found himself humbled by a 1.4-ton heap of silicon in a victory for IBM's Deep Blue that marks a milestone in the progress of artificial intelligence. The new model, Deeper Blue, was fed with more chess software to beef up its strategic and tactical grasp. It is a depressing day for humankind in general.

Despite his defeat, Kasparov belittled Deep Blue. He said it was time for the IBM supercomputer to enter "real" competitive chess. "I would guarantee that I will tear it into pieces," he said.

He attributed his lack of competitive juices to his poor preparation and said 10 days had not been enough. He also blamed bad advice, saying his greatest mistake was to listen to computer specialists.

The champion repeated his suspicion that Deep Blue had received unfair help from its team of computer programmers between games that gave it an unexpected flexibility.

The 19-move loss to the computer was the worst defeat of Kasparov's career. He has never lost a match to a human opponent, and this was the first game he had lost in less than 20 moves.

Queen of the American dream comes unstuck

Richard Thomas in Washington

OPRAH — the world's best friend. Oprah, everybody's big sister, beamed conveniently into the front room. Oprah, America's queen and symbol of all that is good, and all that is rotten, about the United States of America.

Oprah Winfrey, the highest-paid entertainer in the US, has never been more powerful. Her daily talk show is watched by almost one in 10 Americans and syndicated to 120 nations. Her personal wealth is nudging the $1 billion mark.

But herein lies her problem. So colossal is her status that Winfrey has apparently fallen under her own spell, victim of a common disease among the powerful — the belief that they can solve any problem.

In her case, she decided to tackle poverty. In a modern twist on the Pygmalion tale, she vowed to help save some of Chicago's poor, pledging $3 million to lift families from the abyss into America's dream of middle-classdom.

A sense of assumed omnipotence surrounded her initiative: "I want to destroy the welfare mentality," she declared, describing a goal that has eluded every US administration since the 1930s. Two years, and almost $1 million of her own money later, she finally pulled the plug.

The story of her attempt to save a handful of Chicago's underclass is an object lesson in both the dangerous fantasies of famous people and the recent warping of US attitudes towards welfare. Her plan to alleviate poverty was simple: throw money at the problem. Lots of it.

Building on her desire to help America's children (she is determinedly childless herself, although she has a "steady beau" in 46-year-old consultant Stedman Graham), and inspired by the story of a teenager called Kalvin whom she befriended, Winfrey poured funds into a new foundation, Families for a Better Life, based in Chicago, where her show is produced.

Every possible kind of help was given to the first seven families who made the cut, at a cost of $185,000 for each: new housing, family therapy, literacy skills, job-search assistance, financial advice, guidance from "motivational" experts. At first the signs were good: two parents gained full-time jobs, though one of them — landed by Kalvin's mother — was at the foundation itself.

Despite small improvements in the lives of participants, the rate of progress was so slow that Winfrey began to worry she was pouring good money after bad. One mother, thousands of dollars in debt to a credit-card company, refused to give up her mobile phone. In the end Oprah's patience snapped.

Oprah feels she has much to give to America. "I don't know of anything more powerful than to influence people, to bring them closer to themselves," she has said.

Last autumn, launching her own book club — a regular 15-minute slot on her show — she told the 20 million people glued to their sets, without apparent irony, of her grand scheme: "I want to get the whole country reading again." The club certainly turned the publishing world on its head; just the briefest mention from Oprah now sends books soaring up the bestseller list. All she touches turns to gold: Jacquelyn Mitchard's Deep End Of The Ocean, which sold 100,000 copies before making Oprah's list, now has a print run of 915,000.

Oprah shapes lives directly, too. "Watching you be yourself every day makes me want to be more of myself," one viewer wrote earlier this year. This magic ingredient of transparency — being herself every day, in front of millions — is the key to the success of The Oprah Winfrey Show. Far from expecting the guests to tell all while she remains aloof, Oprah has used her 11-year-old programme as a platform for her own psychological disrobing.

She personifies the breathtaking and liberating openness of American culture: everyone telling everyone else everything, all the time. When the sitcom star Ellen DeGeneres came out as a lesbian, in real life and as her screen character, only Oprah could play the part of the therapist.

Winfrey's 42 years have encompassed all the American nightmares — poverty, child abuse, drugs, racism, obesity — and all the redeeming features of the American dream: a giddying rise to fame, a third home in Aspen, fitness training, constant cathartic release of her inner demons. She works so hard that she needs two security guards, protecting her in shifts.

She certainly backed her money with action at the Families for a Better Life Foundation, attending meetings from the autumn of 1994. She helped to appoint staff and pushed for action: all to no avail. The details of what went wrong in the Chicago project are only now coming to light. Neither Winfrey nor the organisation that helped set up the foundation, the Hull House Association — which hopes to find another benefactor — is prepared to comment about the other.


The best-known black woman in the world, but did she fall under her own spell? PHOTOGRAPH: ALPHA

The identity of the families is a closely guarded secret, as is what happened to them. Louise Kiernan, a Chicago Tribune reporter, says: "You can't get anything out of any of them. It's a wall of silence."

Winfrey's only public comment was bitter. "I felt myself turning into government," she said, explaining her withdrawal. "I spent nearly a million dollars, most of it going in development and administrative costs."

At almost the same time, the government got fed up with being government, too. A bill was drafted that Bill Clinton, seeking re-election, signed, declaring the "end of welfare as we know it". Sceptics say the last four words were unnecessary.

In the 1930s, a New Deal had been struck between the federal government and the people, decreeing that Washington would take final responsibility for the poor. With a stroke of his pen, Clinton sent out a new message: The Deal's Off.

INDIVIDUAL states would now be responsible for welfare provision. With a generous state likely to attract all the poor from a penny-pinching neighbour, a mad scramble for the bottom is unfolding. Meanwhile legal immigrants, most of whom have lived, worked and paid taxes in the US for years, have had their benefit entitlements stripped away. Strict time limits are being applied to family welfare payments. One of Clinton's advisers, Peter Edelman, left the administration in disgust.

Mark Greenberg, a welfare expert at the independent Centre for Law and Social Policy in Washington, says the reform is a disaster. "It will not have an overnight effect, it is not an immediate revolution," he says. "But the poor will be gradually squeezed and squeezed."

The decision by a Democrat, even a new Democrat, to sign such a regressive bill shows how impatient the political classes have become with welfare recipients. Long after Ronald Reagan's departure, a new individualism — more tough than love — has taken over the poverty debate. Warm-sounding rhetoric about giving "a hand-up, not a hand-out" (echoed by the British Labour party) disguises the brutal fact that if you cannot, or do not, take the hand, it might be taken away.

And people like Oprah fuel this philosophy. If, in her own life, she overcame all these obstacles to prosper magnificently, the thinking goes, why can't the others? Look at the Oprah story: an accidental outcome of a teenage fling in Mississippi, raised in poverty by a grandmother, raped by relatives in her own teens (losing the child that resulted from one such attack), and struggling throughout her 20s and 30s with a serious weight problem. As if that were not enough, Oprah told a stunned 1995 guest on her show, a crack addict: "I did your drug."

Today her status and wealth have made her the most important black woman in the world. She is likely to be the first American black billionaire. From fat, drug-ridden and poor to lean, clean and rich: a role model for poverty escapees. The path is clear: it is for them to take it or suffer the consequences.

This all-or-nothing approach infuriates the welfare providers in Chicago who missed out on Oprah's largess. Agencies that watched, flabbergasted, as she tried to improve the lot of a few hand-picked poor are furious about the waste of money on "a short-term vanity project".

"God knows what we could have done with all that money if we'd had it," bemoans Jenny Wittner, director of the Chicago Commons education and training centre based in a crumbling building in the centre of the city. "People don't realise that it takes time to reverse years of poverty . . . People don't come out of a program 'fixed' and ready for a job."

But Oprah reflects and promotes the view that if you want something badly enough, it will be yours. Her whole show is based on this *wantingness* at the heart of America: people *want* to talk. The US *wants* to be the biggest, the fastest, the best, the strongest, the fiercest. It *wants* to win the cold war *and* the Olympics.

The infection of welfare policy with the "up-or-out" mantra of management consultancies has a basic flaw: the architects of the new policies are, by definition, the ones who did make it and who cannot understand why others are not swarming up the trails they have blazed.

There is, though, a possibility, highly unfashionable in policy circles: What if there are people who simply do not possess the resources to climb up the ladder out of poverty, to take the outstretched hand of the state? The Chicago experience suggests there are some who will not easily be levered out of the ghetto. Perhaps the project expected too much too quickly, perhaps the barrage of expertise and psyching-up was overwhelming for the participants, perhaps the people running the show worried more about the sense of "progress" than in the tangible well-being of the client group.

Oprah's $1 million pebble caused barely a ripple. Chicago's poor are still with us. But for her, the loss of money, and some face, is a small dent in her crown. At least she *tried*, her fans say. And for her, trying is what success is ultimately about.

Martin Walker is away

Ex-leader 'reveals Quebec UDI plan'

Anne McIlroy in Ottawa

REVELATIONS that the former premier of Quebec had a secret plan to declare instant independence from Canada had he won the province's 1995 referendum on sovereignty have stunned his separatist colleagues as they campaign in the Canadian federal election.

Jacques Parizeau's plan included a deal with France to recognise Quebec swiftly as an independent country.

Mr Parizeau campaigned in the referendum promising to seek a new partnership with the rest of Canada if the people of Quebec voted Yes. But his new book reveals that his intentions were the opposite, and that the Quebec government would have declared independence unilaterally within 10 days of a referendum victory. The sovereigntists almost won in October 1995, taking 49.4 per cent of the vote compared with 50.6 per cent for the federalists.

The revelation appeared to come as a shock to Gilles Duceppe, leader of the Bloc Québécois, which forms the official opposition in the federal House of Commons. He and Lucien Bouchard, Quebec's new premier, were on the defensive last week. Both had stressed a new partnership with Canada in 1995 and continue to do so.

"It is not good for the sovereignty movement — and what is not good for the sovereignty movement is not good for the Bloc," Mr Duceppe said.

Mr Bouchard insisted Mr Parizeau would never have acted contrary to the referendum mandate. "Never would sovereigntists, myself included, have allowed anyone to contravene the commitment contracted."

The book, Pour Un Québec Souverain (For A Sovereign Quebec), was published last week, but a Quebec City newspaper printed excerpts the previous week. The leaks were a boon to the prime minister, Jean Chrétien. Opinion polls show his ruling Liberal party has an enormous lead nationally and is widely expected to win a second mandate on June 2.

But he is unpopular in his native Quebec, and the Liberals badly want to gain ground there before another referendum on Quebec's status. The revelation allowed the prime minister to attack the trustworthiness of the Bloc Québécois, which has placed sovereignty at the heart of its election campaign.

In a hastily scheduled stop in Quebec City, Mr Chrétien reminded voters that Mr Parizeau once said they were like lobsters: that once they voted Yes they would be in the trap.

Mr Parizeau writes that had France given Quebec recognition, the United States would probably have done so. A unilateral declaration of independence was key to the plan. "France, like other nations, recognises only countries, not intentions," he writes. He insists he never committed himself not to make a UDI.

As the Balkan countries spiral further into poverty and violent protest, royal claimants in exile have spied a chance to pose as saviours. They are seeking to return to their thrones half a century after their forebears were deposed. The prospects look good. **Ian Traynor** reports

The men who would be kings

THE worse it gets in the Balkans, the better it is for the wannabe crowned heads of southern Europe. Last month, a middle-aged Johannesburg exporter flew into the anarchic and destitute Albanian capital of Tirana. A couple of days later, a Madrid business consultant arrived in the Bulgarian town of Veliko Turnovo. In March, a retired Geneva market gardener grabbed centre stage at a service in the Orthodox cathedral in the Romanian capital, Bucharest.

The Jo'burg entrepreneur, Leka Zogu, said: "I am the legitimate king of the Albanians. It is up to the Albanian people to decide whether Albania should be a monarchy or a republic."

The Madrid consultant, Simeon Coburgotski, declared: "If the Bulgarian parliament decides to conduct a referendum on whether to have a republic or a monarchy, I will accept and support the decision."

The retired gardener, Michael Hohenzollern, stated: "My aim is to help Romania in the best way possible."

The best way for all three men — and for a fourth, a London insurance broker, Alexander Karadjordjevic — is a royalist restoration in the countries of southeastern Europe, more than half a century after communists and fascists chased the monarchs into exile.

Mr Zogu is really Leka, pretender to the Albanian throne and son of the last Albanian king, Zog, dethroned by Italian fascists in 1939.

Mr Coburgotski, who dined recently with the Bulgarian president, is Simeon II, heir to the Bulgarian throne after his father, King Boris III, died mysteriously in 1943 while visiting Hitler; Simeon was kicked into exile by the communists in 1946.

Mr Hohenzollern is King Michael of Romania, who ascended to the Romanian throne in 1941, eventually put his country on the Allied side in the war, and was forced to abdicate by the communists in 1947.

Mr Karadjordjevic was born and brought up in London, but he is Crown Prince Alexander of Serbia and Yugoslavia whose father, King Peter, fled to England when the Nazis occupied Belgrade in 1941.

The overthrow of the Balkan dynasties might or might not have been bad news for their countries, but it was definitely good news for London's better hotels. The Serb royals took up residence at Claridge's, where Alexander was born. Zog, baby Leka, and the Albanian courtiers decamped to the Ritz and the Savoy hotels. Buckingham Palace declared Claridge's Yugoslav territory for a day in 1941, when Alexander was born, since otherwise he would have lost his claim to the throne. George VI was his godfather.

Restorationist prospects have rarely seemed rosier. The past six months have seen Balkan states succumb to mass poverty, violence, protest and near civil war. Bulgarians are going hungry as the rival clans of ex-communist and anti-communist politicians bicker and backstab. Serbia was paralysed for months by street protests against the authoritarian regime of President Slobodan Milosevic. President Sali Berisha's misrule of Albania has reduced the country to anarchy and a north-south polarisation needing 6,000 international peacekeeping troops. Only Romania last year experienced the first peaceful, democratic handover of power in its history.

The exiled kings and claimants perceive their countries' crises as an opportunity to be hailed as national saviours, rallying figures of authority, unity and stability.

Since Romania is the least worrying country of the four, King Michael is making the shrewder use of his sudden return to favour. For the past couple of months, he has toured west European capitals as a roving ambassador, arguing passionately for Romania's inclusion in Nato and the European Union. He had lunch with Queen Elizabeth. He talked the French into supporting Romania's Nato bid. The Romanian embassy in London even held a reception in his honour, officially describing him as "His Majesty".

For years after the anti-Ceausescu revolution of 1989, the ex-communists in power in Bucharest barred him from the country. His attempts to enter Romania were foiled by troops at the airport.

Under the new president installed last November, Emil Constantinescu, there has been a transformation: the king and the president have dined together in Bucharest, and functionaries have been instructed to address Michael as "Your Majesty". At a service at Bucharest's Orthodox cathedral, Michael and his wife, Queen Ana, were seated on the old royal throne.

Michael's citizenship was restored. He was fêted everywhere by huge crowds and he was given the



Leka fled Albania when only three days old, and returned aged 58



Simeon Corburgotski, a Madrid business consultant and heir to the Bulgarian throne, salutes the crowd that turned up to greet him in Veliko Turnovo PHOTO: DIMITAR DEV...

mission to win over foreign hearts and minds to Romania's Nato ambitions. Keeping his country out of Nato, he said in London last month, would spell "unending trouble".

All the signs are that, in return, he will recover a palace in Romania and return from Swiss exile almost 50 years to the day after he abdicated. And there may yet be a referendum on whether Romania should be a republic or a constitutional monarchy. Michael, the sole surviving European head of state from the war years, regularly chalks up about 20 per cent support in opinion polls.

The model cited by the ousted dynasties is the unifying and stabilising influence of Spain's constitutional monarchy in effecting the shift from authoritarianism to democracy.

Simeon said he did not want to interfere in politics, and promptly proceeded to call for a 'reformist majority' in the new parliament

As the Balkan countries, with minimal experience of democracy, struggle to shake off the legacy of communist misrule and despotism, royalists argue that constitutional monarchies would provide an anchor. Referendums on the issue may be held this year in both Bulgaria and Albania.

Simeon, who left Bulgaria in 1946, aged nine, returned for the first time in May last year. On April 15, he went to Veliko Turnovo, where the country's first constitution was proclaimed in 1879. Ahead of last month's elections in Bulgaria, Simeon said he did not want to interfere in politics, and promptly proceeded to call for a "reformist majority" in the new parliament.

Whether Bulgaria remains a republic or restores the monarchy, he wants to be head of state.

"I could be a constitutional king, as has been the case in the past," he told Bulgarians. "But if you think this is not democratic and that the president can be elected while the king cannot, then give me a mandate for four years or else forget about me.

"People in the street trust Simeon because they do not see me as a politician who wants to manipulate them. In a constitutional monarchy the king might act as a mediator. A monarch could help pour oil on troubled waters."

Whether he runs for president or not, he still sees himself as king. Unlike Michael of Romania, he has never abdicated and insists the communist referendum that turned Bulgaria into a republic in 1946 was rigged and invalid.

The Romanian and the Bulgarian crowns stem from German dynasties — Michael is of the German Hohenzollern dynasty, Simeon from the House of Saxe-Coburg and Gotha; but the Serbian ruling family is thoroughly indigenous.

The rival Serbian Karadjordjevic and Obrenovic dynasties battled throughout the 19th century; the royal claim now rests with the Karadjordjevics even though Alexander has barely set foot in his kingdom and has trouble speaking the language.

But in February, the three opposition leaders who ran the recent campaign against President Milosevic made the pilgrimage to Claridge's and the court of the Crown Prince. One of them, Vuk Draskovic, said he wanted Serbia to be a constitutional monarchy and promised to restore Alexander's citizenship if he won the Serbian presidency in elections this year. "Serbia needs a Serbian Juan Carlos," Mr Draskovic declared. The chances of a restoration, however, appear remote.

Albania (the poorest country in Europe with the youngest and fastest-growing population) has been reduced to ungovernability and its people want to move out — just as Leka is moving in. Leka has the flimsiest case. The Zog dynasty stretches only as far back as Leka's father, Ahmed Bey Zogu, a northern chieftain who persuaded parliament to proclaim him monarch.

After Albania was created as an independent state in 1913, its tribal chieftains battled for supremacy. One clan leader was Zog, Leka's father, who became prime minister in the 1920s for two years, lost a power struggle, was driven out of the country only to return with his private army, become president and then have himself proclaimed king in 1928. His rule lasted 11 years — an authoritarian period now viewed with ambivalence — before Zog, Queen Geraldine and Leka fled to Greece because of Mussolini.

Leka was three days' old when he left, 58 when he returned last month. "He has not forgotten us, nor have we in Albania forgotten him," an Albanian commentator said as the plane touched down.

He is now planning a royal restoration from the lounge of his rented house, as a crowd of tearful royalists bustles around the gates in hope of an audience.

The 6ft 8in chain-smoking man who would be king has hitherto supported himself by exporting minerals and heavy machinery to the Middle East and Asia from Johannesburg. The South African years have left an audible trace in the accents of his courtiers.

Within minutes of arriving, Leka's "royal court minister", Abedin Mulosmanaj, made it clear why "the king" was in town: "Only through a referendum will the Albanian people have the freedom to choose the constitutional form of government that best answers their individual and national aspirations: a parliamentary monarchy or a republic . . . Let us unite under the motto: Homeland Above All."

And so say all of the would-be kings. The odds must still be against the collapse of Balkan republicanism and their return. However, before the year is out, there is bound to be at least one serious attempt to enthrone a returned exile.

Girl 'raped by primary school boys'

Luke Harding

AN URGENT security review was under way at a primary school last week after a girl of 10 was allegedly raped by five boys, aged nine and 10, in a boys' lavatory.

Scotland Yard confirmed that four 10-year-olds and one nine-year-old were arrested and questioned following the incident during a lunch break at the school in Shepherd's Bush, west London, last week.

All were pupils, and have been suspended and released on bail. They are due to return to Hammersmith police station next month.

The chairman of governors sent a letter to parents assuring them that children's education will not be affected by the incident. "The pupils have been excluded from school by the head while the matter is investigated," the chairman wrote.

"I cannot, of course, go into details of the incident but I did want to tell you officially and assure you that everything appropriate is being done to make sure your child's education will continue as normal."

Many parents, speaking as they dropped their children at school last week, complained the school had become a haven for bullying and abuse. "It's disgraceful," said one father with two children at the school. "My youngest son is terrified to go to school every day. We have complained constantly to the teachers but nothing seems to be done about it."

Another woman claimed: "The school is infamous for poor discipline. Last year I saw the police break up a fight in the playground. Things are out of hand."

Education officials at Hammersmith and Fulham admit the school suffers from truancy, poor test results and low achievement, but they point out it serves a deprived council estate with acute social problems, and say staff are doing their best in difficult circumstances. "It has all the problems you would associate with an inner-city school," one conceded.

A spokesman for Hammersmith and Fulham council said the girl's parents were being offered "every support". Counsellors were being provided. Support staff have also been dispatched to offer help to pupils and staff at the school, which cannot be named.

"We are keen to find out what happened, but in the meantime we have a school full of children," a council spokeswoman said. "We are trying to keep the day as normal as possible."

Scotland Yard said that five boys were arrested last week following a complaint from the girl's mother. They were questioned in the presence of an "appropriate adult" and a report has been submitted to the Crown Prosecution Service.

● A boy aged 13 was charged with the rape of a 12-year-old girl who was allegedly set upon by youths on a disused railway line in Castlecroft, Wolverhampton, last week.

The boy, who has not been named, was remanded into police custody and later appeared before Wolverhampton youth court in the morning, a spokesman for West Midlands police said.

Two other youths, aged 13 and 15, have been charged with indecent assault in connection with the incident and have been conditionally bailed to appear before the court at a later date, he added.

Detective Inspector Dave Whatton said at least five boys were present.

School hit squads, page 11

Army captain charged with desertion

Kamal Ahmed

A BRITISH army captain who was commended for his actions when a Bosnian peacekeeping patrol he was heading came under fire has been charged with desertion in a row over repayments of long-service bonuses.

Robert Ryan, aged 31, from Stoke-on-Trent, said he left the army legitimately 18 months ago after becoming disillusioned with its management. He was arrested in February at his travel guide business in Sarajevo and brought back to Britain.

At the centre of the charge facing Mr Ryan before a court martial is a "financial retention incentive" that officers are paid to encourage them to serve their full 22-year commission.

When Mr Ryan said he was leaving the army in 1995, officials demanded that he pay back the full incentive payment.

He refused, and the army recorded him as a "deserter". He subsequently paid the amount back in full. "The army has acted in a vindictive way," Mr Ryan said on Sunday.

Mr Ryan, a captain with the Cheshire Regiment, served in Bosnia with the United Nations peacekeeping force for seven months before returning to Britain in May 1993.

His regiment was one of the first to come under fire from Serbian forces, and Mr Ryan was credited with being the first officer to order his soldiers to return fire. His actions earned him a Mention in Dispatches.

After leaving the army he set up his own business in Bosnia.

A Ministry of Defence spokesman said that Mr Ryan had left his regiment without permission after being told he had to return the £6,500 incentive payment. Mr Ryan received £3,900, but the army demanded the increased amount to cover taxes and interest.

Mr Ryan made one payment of £750 before leaving. He later repaid the full amount, but the army said he should have paid it before he was discharged. "He was told he would have to repay the money in full. On getting that bit of information, he went absent without leave," the spokesman said.

GUARDIAN WEEKLY
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The Week in Britain James Lewis

Northern Ireland: an old problem for New Labour

SOME THINGS never change. For all his success in moving to honour manifesto commitments in other areas, the new Prime Minister, Tony Blair, inherits a Northern Ireland problem that is as intractable as ever, and Labour's first 10 days in office were marked by a rising of sectarian tension there.

The Irish prime minister, John Bruton, was the first overseas head of government to visit Mr Blair, and although they had an amicable meeting, Labour sources said there would be no rush to make new moves "just to give an artificial appearance of activity".

Mr Bruton, under pressure from nationalists before his own imminent general election, raised the prospect of Sinn Fein, the political arm of the IRA, being admitted to the peace talks due to resume on June 3. But Mr Blair adhered to the stance of his predecessor: the IRA must first declare a ceasefire and there must be a timelag to prove it is genuine.

Mr Bruton said Labour's majority gave it a big advantage, implying that Mr Blair would not be dependent on Unionist support in the Commons. But the new prime minister still needs to take the Unionists with him in any peace process, and Mr Blair was careful, before meeting Mr Bruton, to reassure the Ulster Unionist leader, David Trimble, that he would not yield to nationalist pressure.

While this was going on, a member of the Royal Ulster Constabulary, 24-year-old Darren Brady, was shot dead as he sat drinking in a Belfast bar — the first policeman to be killed since the IRA declared a ceasefire in August 1994. Responsibility was claimed by the small but volatile Irish National Liberation Army, thought to be used by the IRA as a "proxy" in this and other attacks.

In another sectarian attack, a Protestant, Ivan Hetherington, was attacked by three men in Belfast's Waterside area. He was kicked about the head and is in hospital on a life-support machine. Six men were also charged with the murder of a Portadown Catholic, Robert Hamill, aged 25, who was kicked to death by a loyalist mob. Hamill's friends accused the police of refusing to come to his assistance.

THE DAY AFTER the first sitting of the new Parliament, Tory ranks were depleted further by the sudden death of Sir Michael Shersby, who had retained his Uxbridge seat, but with a majority slashed to 724 from 13,172 in 1992.

Possible successors abided by the convention of not speaking publicly about a byelection so soon after a death. But there was plenty of private speculation, mostly about whether it would provide an opportunity for a comeback by the defeated Cabinet minister, Michael Portillo. It was thought he would be wiser to wait for a byelection in a safer seat later in the Parliament.

The Conservatives are under no pressure to call an early byelection, and it could be many months before the vacancy is filled. A delayed contest could attract the former party chairman, Chris Patten, whose stint as governor of Hong Kong ends in less than two months when the colony is handed back to China.

MORE THAN 100 pupils at a school in Kent went on a rampage after five teachers were made redundant. Fire alarms and extinguishers were set off, windows broken, pictures ripped off walls and plants uprooted at Montgomery School in Canterbury in protest at the cutbacks caused by a £155,000 budget deficit.

Headteacher Rodney Freakes, was "impressed" by the pupils' loyalty to their teachers. He said their message had been noted and would be conveyed to the governors. His reaction was also noted by "astonished" parents and governors, who will be demanding explanations.

A WOMAN of 41 with four children and three grandchildren became a surrogate mother of triplets and said she would consider doing it again if she found the right couple to help. Anne Keep, of Redditch, Worcestershire, gave birth to the triplets for a London couple, Anthony and Julie Cohn, who had been trying to start a family for 10 years.

Two eggs were removed from Mrs Cohn, fertilised with her husband's sperm, and implanted in Mrs Keep's womb. One split into identical twins. No money changed hands. Mr Cohn, a paediatric surgeon, said Mrs Keep's motivation was "purely love and selflessness".

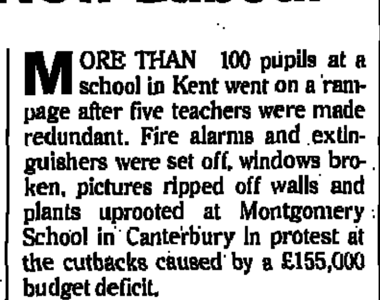
THE GOVERNMENT may face a bumpy ride in trying to honour two of its promises — to ban all handguns by the end of the year, and to stop the manufacture of landmines in Britain.

A partial ban, covering larger guns, was imposed by the Conservatives — amid strong opposition — in the wake of the Dunblane massacre. Labour plans to extend it to include less powerful full-bore weapons below .22 calibre.

Some senior party figures, however, believe this will take up time needed for other legislation, and the gun lobby is looking to the House of Lords to scrutinise (and delay) the legislation in a manner now unlikely to happen in the Commons.

The military establishment opposes the ban on land-mine manufacture, and army chiefs are expected to argue that the need to control the use of anti-personnel mines must be balanced against a commander's duty to protect his troops.







Prime Minister Tony Blair with some of Labour's record intake of 101 women MPs PHOTO: KIERAN DOHERTY

Blair opts for populist measures

Michael White and David Hencke

LABOUR'S first Cabinet meeting since 1979 last week adopted a blatantly populist style when senior ministers agreed to forgo a large pay rise, to use first names instead of titles and to legislate immediately to redistribute £1 billion of National Lottery money.

The new team decided that the public response to Tony Blair's election campaign plan to divert the midweek lottery pot to good causes in health, education and science had been so positive that they would find room for early legislation in Wednesday's Queen's Speech, in which the new government will lay out its legislative programme for the next 18 months. The speech was expected to list 22 bills.

Education is Mr Blair's declared priority — a key bill will reduce classroom sizes — but Labour comes into power with a daunting commitment on constitutional reform, notably Scottish and Welsh referendums and devolved assemblies, as well as tougher law and order procedures.

Some bills will emerge only after further consultation, including one to promote a Freedom of Information Act, but legislation to ban tobacco advertising is expected.

Mr Blair was solemnly reported as opening the Cabinet meeting with the words "Good morning, everyone" before repeating the pep talk he had given his 418 MPs the previous day about the need for discipline and hard work — to govern as New Labour in the same way that they had won.

The new Cabinet, which met for two hours in a session officially described as "serious, brisk and sensible", rejected the huge 1997 pay rises John Major had left in the pipeline. The gesture was judged necessary to fulfil Chancellor Gordon Brown's pledge to reject the extra rise, made when he announced public sector pay restraint in early February.

The Cabinet also made the historic decision to stop addressing colleagues as Prime Minister, Chancellor or Northern Ireland Secretary and stick to Tony, Gordon and Mo. Even the Cabinet Secretary, the austere Sir Robin Butler, will become Robin, alongside the Foreign Secretary, Robin Cook.

The new Labour Government is also pledged to hold an inquiry into party funding. Mr Blair will invite Lord Nolan, chairman of the Committee on Standards in Public Life, to hold the inquiry — a move that John Major resisted for two years.

The day before the Cabinet meeting, Mr Blair greeted the largest contingent of Labour MPs to arrive at Westminster with a warning not to disappoint millions of voters who took "a leap of faith" to elect them — or to lapse into the sleaze and indiscipline that marked the Tory years. Addressing the first post-election meeting of the new Parliamentary Labour Party (PLP), the Prime Minister adopted a sombre tone, telling the new MPs they had work to do. Reversing the notorious boast of new Labour minister Hartley Shawcross in 1945 — "We are the masters now" — Mr Blair said: "We are not the masters. The people are the masters. We are the servants of the people. We will never forget that."

● Downing Street announced last week that the twice-weekly slanging match of Prime Minister's Question Time is to be scrapped by Mr Blair, who confessed to hating the ordeal when he was leader of the opposition. Instead, it will be replaced by a half-hour session each Wednesday and stripped of some of its ritual.

PM's Question Time to lose its snarl

COMMENT
David McKie

PRIME MINISTER'S Question Time was once called one of the glories of Parliament, subjecting the most powerful person in the land to the critical judgment, even abuse, of the people's representatives.

But in practice the Question Time Tony Blair wants to reform is a very different, more braying and brutal, affair from the one academics used to commend. At times — a week before the election, for instance — it had more to do with blood sports than democratic accountability. On that day, a prime minister facing defeat poured out a torrent of venom against the Labour leader persecuting him — the same leader who a few weeks before pointed a scornful finger and denounced him as "weak, weak, weak".

Normally, the Opposition intervened two or three times on the prime minister: on that day Mr Blair came back for a fourth attack on John Major's decision to prorogue parliament rather than wait for the Downey report on MPs and sleaze. Exciting stuff for participants, but not much help to public enlightenment.

Thirty years ago, on the equivalent date in March, Harold Wilson had to answer seven narrowly targeted questions to which answers had been prepared, among them: Would he review security practices? What was his view on textile imports? Had he plans to meet the Polish foreign minister? Ten years later, James Callaghan faced only three. Had he plans to meet the TUC? Would he visit the Merseyside shipyards? How did he defend the new credit agreement with the USSR?

Many MPs thought that system made it too easy. Because questions were tabled in advance, the issues dominating the day's headlines went undiscussed. Questions put down for the PM to answer were often transferred to other departments, letting the intended prey escape.

So a practice grew of asking more general questions. Would the PM visit the member's constituency? That opened the way for a supplementary about some hot local issue.

More recently, almost all MPs have asked the same question. Of the 10 on the order paper for March 20 this year, nine were identical, asking Mr Major to state his engagements for the day. That opened the way for virtually anything. When the PM had read out his engagements, opposition MPs could ask whether, in the course of his busy day, he would find time to sack his agriculture minister, for example. Backbench loyalists would equally take their chance, either by being supportive ("will the Prime Minister accept the nation's grateful thanks . . .") or by sniping at the Opposition, inviting the Speaker's wrath, since what the Opposition does is not within the PM's sphere of responsibility.

This sense of the bullring has compounded what prime ministers have usually found a viciously taxing experience. Under the new format, the sort of thrilling moment when front benches are at each other's throats and supporters are shrieking behind them and a leader utters a sally like Thatcher's "frit frit frit" may occur less often. But there will be more chances, perhaps, for questions that don't generate soundbites.

Hit squads to be ordered into schools

Donald MacLeod

MINISTERS are expected this week to order hit squads into failing schools in a dramatic use of one of the Tories' most controversial policies to hammer home the new Government's zero tolerance of poor standards.

In some cases local authorities will be encouraged to close schools and reopen them under new management or draft in head teachers from successful schools, but a number may be taken over by education associations appointed by the Education Secretary, David Blunkett.

The power to take over a failing school from the local authority was strongly opposed by the Labour party and its supporters in local government and by the teaching unions when it was introduced by the Conservative former education secretary, John Patten. But this week Stephen Byers, the schools minister, said: "It is all we've got. There are significant drawbacks, but we will not shrink from using this power to raise standards."

The crackdown on failing schools will be the first initiative by the Standards and Effectiveness Unit headed by Michael Barber, the senior adviser brought into the Department for Education and Employment.

Mr Byers spent the weekend studying a report on the 297 schools in England which inspectors of the Office for Standards in Education judged to have failed and to be in need of special measures. Later this week he is expected to announce the number of schools on the hit list — thought to be more than 20.

He said some had been on special measures for more than 18 months and he accused the Conservatives of allowing schools to drift while failing the children in them. "I am amazed the previous government allowed schools subject to special measures to carry on with no significant improvements in some cases for two years without intervening."

Despite the controversy provoked by the Conservatives' hit squad policy, the power was used only once, when the then education secretary, Gillian Shephard, appointed an education association, including Professor Barber, to oversee Hackney Downs school in London. The association recommended closure, which was carried out.

The Labour government looks like being more ruthless in establishing its credentials on standards, despite its unpopularity among Labour-run councils.

The Government is expected to seek further powers for earlier intervention in schools in this week's Queen's Speech. These will include the Fresh Start concept, outlined in Labour's election manifesto, where a failing school is closed and reopened under new management.

Mr Byers warned local authorities that early intervention was needed to prevent schools drifting into failure and that he would expect them to act. "Local education authorities have to recognise they have an important role to play. It is not just the school but the local authority which has to begin to discharge its responsibilities for raising standards and we will be expecting them to do so."

He wants to see better early warning systems in place, of the kind established in North Tyneside, where an experienced head teacher is seconded to help a new head or one experiencing difficulties. It has never had a school declared failing by Ofsted.

Gulf war syndrome reviewed

David Fairhall

GULF war veterans are to be invited to meet the Government's defence ministerial team to discuss fresh research into "Gulf war syndrome".

Ministers are offering to extend the existing medical assessment programme, covering 1,000 veterans, and the limited research programme already agreed. This is expected to include a study of the combined effect of multiple vaccinations and anti-nerve gas tablets given to troops in the Gulf, often accompanied by dangerous insecticides, as well as the long-term statistical analysis recommended by the Medical Research Council.

But there is still no promise of financial compensation unless the Ministry of Defence can be shown to have been negligent.

The Government's initiative was announced on Sunday by the armed forces minister, John Reid. He promised an investigation into how decisions on medical treatments were made during the 1991 conflict and why ministers and the public were misled about the widespread use of organo-phosphate pesticides (OPs), a point on which Dr Reid's predecessor, Nicholas Soames, was forced to apologise to Parliament last year.

The prospect of some direct research into the likely causes of the syndrome, instead of a three-year epidemiological study, was welcomed by veterans' representatives. The MoD might have opted for this course earlier had it not been overruled by the Medical Research Council. But there will be disappointment the Government has no plans to offer compensation other than war disability pensions.

To obtain more, veterans must prove illnesses came from Gulf service and negligent treatment by the MoD, although this was intended to protect against disease, or chemical and biological weapons attacks.

● An inquiry into the policy of "obstruction, secrecy and misinformation by the Ministry of Agriculture over the poisoning of hundreds of farmers by sheep dip has been ordered by Philip James, architect of the Government's new food agency.

The move has given new hope to the victims of organo-phosphate poisoning who have been campaigning for years to have their condition recognised and battling unsuccessfully for compensation.



Cherie Blair embraces Humphrey, Downing Street's resident cat, to confirm that he will be staying. There were fears that Humphrey might be expelled with his previous master PHOTO: FIONA HANSON

Labour laughing fit to burst

SKETCH
Simon Hoggart

THE House of Commons was full of bewildered groups of people, wandering round, uncertain what to do or where to go, desperately seeking their group leader.

Usually these lost souls are tourists. Last week they were new Labour MPs. When they finally found their way to the Chamber, their party's side was crammed to bursting as never before.

Those lucky enough to get a seat were stuffed buttock-to-buttock, so tightly that if anyone had wriggled, half a dozen new members would have popped up like bread from a toaster and landed on the Tories.

By the Speaker's chair they were jammed like a Cup final crowd. They swarmed around the Serjeant at Arms's seat (Martin Bell, in white suit of course, was perched just below him, in the most neutral place there is in the House).

They filled up the jury boxes, usually for civil servants, and they spilled over from the galleries. They looked like a landslide.

It resembled Frith's Derby Day, at first a massive, colourful canvas — the 120-odd women standing out in this summer's chic orange, fuschia and lime green — then, on closer inspection, packed with fascinating detail. Angela and Maria Eagle, identical twins, both in black costumes with white blouses, causing huge and enjoyable confusion.

There was Anne Begg, the victor of Aberdeen South, the first MP in anyone's memory to be a wheelchair user, tucked up by the Bar of the House, sparkling with happiness. Dennis Skinner, occupying the Edward Heath Memorial Sulking Seat, just below the gangway. Oona King from Bethnal Green, only the second black woman here.

Those senior Tories left behind by the tide scowled angrily: Alan Clark was aiming at Virginia Bottomley with his heat-seeking eye contact. Surely not? No — his very choice of target was proof that he has reformed. I expect.

The Prime Minister arrived to cheers and clapping from new New Labour members, who don't know that the rules forbid applause. But what do they care? They can make up the rules now.

Then it was time for election of the Speaker. First seconder was Gwyneth Dunwoody. She quickly caught the mood. "This is truly a beautiful day, God's in his heaven, and a majority of this House are wearing the right colours!"

The moment came when Betty had to be ceremonially dragged to the chair. No drag queen she. Never has anyone walked there more willingly. Indeed, she dragged her seconders along, until, at the Despatch Box, they retired panting and defeated.

Study of women seeks answers on HRT

Chris Mihill

THE biggest study of women's health yet undertaken in Britain will aim to clarify the risks and benefits of hormone replacement therapy (HRT), including whether it can cause breast cancer, researchers announced last week.

A million women attending British breast screening centres will be recruited in the next two years and followed up to see whether those on HRT have different rates of cancer, heart disease and osteoporosis.

Some studies have suggested that HRT marginally increases the risk of breast cancer, either by encouraging tumour growth or by making mammograms (breast X-rays) harder to read, so that lumps are harder to spot. It is known that HRT can increase the risk of cancer of the endometrium (womb lining) and of blood clots.

But other studies have shown that HRT can protect against the thin-bone disease osteoporosis and may protect against heart disease. More recently it has been suggested that it can also ward off Alzheimer's disease.

The study is being carried out by the Imperial Cancer Research Fund in conjunction with the NHS Breast Screening Programme. It is hoped that answers to HRT questions will be available within five years.

About 2 million women are on HRT. The national breast-screening programme invites all women aged 50 to 64 to have a mammogram every three years — 1.5 million a year. Eighty of the 100 screening centres will include with the invitation a questionnaire asking women to take part in the study, until 1 million have been recruited.

Valerie Beral, head of the ICRF's cancer epidemiology unit at Oxford, who will co-ordinate the study, told a London press conference that HRT was being taken by an increasing number of women, and clear answers about its risks and benefits were needed. She and fellow researchers had been surprised to find from pilot studies that as many as a third of women having mammograms were taking HRT. Its use had doubled since 1990.

"This is the biggest study of women's health that has ever been done," said Professor Beral. "There is evidence of a reduction in heart disease and osteoporosis; there may be an increase in breast cancer; there is an increase in endometrial cancer and in blood clots — how all this ties together is not clear.

"We want to give a picture of what is happening as soon as possible, because so many women are asking questions. We want to make the information public so women know what they are talking about with HRT in terms of personal risk and benefits."

If HRT was increasing breast cancer, it was not doing so in a dramatic way, otherwise a sharp rise in cases would have been seen by now. By 1999, 6,000 of the women in the study might have had breast cancer diagnosed, and by 2001 around 6,000 would have died from heart disease.

She said large numbers of women were needed to produce unequivocal answers from the study, and 1 million women represented a fifth of the 50-64 age group in Britain.

In Brief

THE High Court has given the go-ahead for contempt proceedings against the Evening Standard, its editor, Max Hastings, and a journalist, Mark Honigsbaum, over publication of a story that forced the abandonment of the trial of six alleged Whitemoor prison escapees.

A 62-YEAR-OLD grandmother was jailed for three years after being convicted of heroin dealing. Southwark crown court heard that Jean Doyle, virtually housebound through ill health, was caught taking 26 wraps of the class A drug from her cleavage as police officers smashed down her front door.

THE number of those who live alone in their own flat or house has risen from 370,000 in the late 1970s to at least 1 million today, a report by the Survey of English Housing shows.

AN early draft of Lawrence of Arabia's classic account of desert wisdom, The Seven Pillars of Wisdom, fetched £31,290 when it was sold at auction to the ruler of Qatar, Sheikh Hassan bin Mohammed.

UNIONIST and Tory MPs were outraged after Sinn Fein confirmed it intended to set up an office at Westminster for its two new MPs, Gerry Adams and Martin McGuinness.

JOHN O'CONNOR, aged 27, a teacher at a west London language college, has been sacked for upsetting the Tory-supporting director by wearing a red rose in support of Labour on polling day.

ABORTION figures continue to be higher than normal, according to government statistics, with abortion charities saying the impact of the 1995 Pill scare was still having an effect. Figures for July-September 1996 show the number of terminations in England and Wales rose by 7 per cent compared with the same period in 1995, from 38,441 to 41,162.

NONE of the convictions for which the Bridgewater Four were jailed was safe, a crown QC admitted at the Court of Appeal. Jeremy Roberts said the prosecution's approach had been completely altered by fresh evidence in February that showed police had forged a confession.

ADRIAN Henry, aged 14, of north London, who led a gang rape attack on an Austrian tourist in London, was sentenced to 12 years' detention by an Old Bailey judge.

THE regulator body for nursing has shown its resolve to take a tougher line with sex offenders by striking off Paul Clarke, of St Helens, Merseyside, for making indecent videotapes of young children.

EU cash to save bittern

THE number of bitterns is continuing to fall, putting the bird on the edge of extinction in Britain, *writes Paul Brown*.

The male bird's booming call, intended to attract a mate, is now so rare that a researcher tours the last remaining breeding sites to record the boomers and get a reliable count.

Last year there were 22 booming males, this year there are 14. The European Union is so concerned that it has given £1.5 million to try to save the species, about £70,000 for each breeding male on last year's count. The money will go on enlarging and restoring reedbeds at 10 sites in Norfolk and Suffolk and individual sites in Essex, Cambridgeshire and Lancashire, where single bittern pairs have been known to breed.

The boom, a bit like the sound produced by blowing across the top of a bottle, is the best way of locating the bird, which lives in reedbeds, mostly in East Anglia. Being tall, thin and shy it is hard to see. By recording the booms, one can distinguish the males as individuals and chart their range and numbers. Females are almost impossible to find except when feeding their young.

Bitterns, slightly smaller than herons, used to be common in Britain when reeds were used for thatching and the reedbeds of the Broads and other wetlands were harvested.

A well-managed reedbed is an ideal breeding ground, and the birds were plentiful until a fancy by the Victorians for bittern pie wiped them out.

In 1910, bitterns returned to the Norfolk Broads from the Continent and numbers reached 60-80 breeding pairs in the 1950s before a decline set in. The problem seems to be a lack of managed reedbeds, and a shortage of food for breeding birds because of a fall in fish numbers caused by pollution. The import of grass from Hungary for thatching and intensive farming methods are said to be to blame.

● The rapid disappearance of 11 species of once common British birds, including the skylark, turtle dove, lapwing and swallow, was last week linked by conservationists to the increased use of pesticides on farmland.

Straw lets Nepalese man stay

Kamal Ahmed

A NEPALESE man facing deportation, despite being adopted by a British millionaire after a pact made in the Himalayas, is to be allowed to stay in Britain, it emerged on Monday.

The Home Secretary, Jack Straw, overturned the decision by his predecessor, Michael Howard, to deport Jay Khadka, aged 21, using his powers of discretion to allow exceptional leave for Mr Khadka to remain. Mr Howard had decided Mr Khadka should be deported, despite a recommendation by the independent Immigration Appeals Tribunal that he should be allowed to stay.

His adoptive family, who live in a "community" at Clearwell Castle in Clearwell, Gloucestershire, were overwhelmed by the decision. "It has been six years of worry and strain trying to win the right for our son to remain with us," said Richard Morley, who went to Nepal to rescue Mr Khadka from a life of poverty.

"We are overjoyed that the new government stood firm on human rights and has given all those who seek compassion a fresh hope."

Immigrant support groups said the decision marked a new phase in attitudes towards people who apply to stay in Britain.

"We are delighted. This shows that although Mr Straw is not going to be soft in this area he will take on board the advice of the Immigration Appeals Tribunal, which was effectively sidelined by Mr Howard," said Claude Moraes, the director of the Joint Council for the Welfare of Immigrants. He said it gave hope to other immigrants appealing against deportation.

In a statement, the Home Office said Mr Straw accepted the tribunal's decision that "there is not the slightest danger that Mr Khadka would ever become a burden on public funds". Mr Khadka "appears a young man of promise and it would be regrettable if that promise were to be fundamentally affected".

Mr Morley was saved by Mr Khadka's father after the millionaire fell ill during a mountaineering trip in the Himalayas. Mr Morley brought the boy to Britain in 1990 after making a "debt of honour" with his dying father.

Goodbye James, hello Blagnat

John Ezard

TWO proud parents, Mr and Mrs Wall, walked into a Staffordshire register office recently to announce their chosen names for their twin sons: Brick and Stone.

Fortunately for the twins, the registrar dissuaded them, but, as the new Oxford Concise Dictionary Of First Names shows, not all registrars have been so persuasive.

The dictionary, published last week, records more than 150 unusual or downright bizarre first names for children, ranging from Albion, Antrim, Avon, Blagnat, Flint and Gobnat to Caprice, Jevon, Mimosa, Narelle, Roxy, Thessaly and Zenith.

The book's editor, Patrick Hanks, who tells the story about Mr and Mrs Wall, said: "People feel less constrained by the forces of convention once associated with baptism. This is part of the decline of the traditional values of church and state."

Mr Hanks says in his preface that the new names are not yet as common as James or Sophie. But the process of adding to the small stock of traditional names, traditionally linked to the Bible, has "accelerated greatly" since the 1960s.

The book has traced names from as far away as Hawaii, including Aloha for girls and Keanu for boys — popularised by film star Keanu Reeves. Some names, such as Antrim and Thessaly, show the growing popularity of the American habit of borrowing place names. Others, such as Blagnat and Gobnat, revive names of Celtic saints or queens.

Albion is sometimes given by parents wanting to mark their affection for Britain. Caprice is a model. And Roxy was originally an American cinema chain. In British slang the word came to mean flashy or glamorous.

Howard under fire in leadership battle

Ewen MacAskill and Michael White

JOHN Redwood launched his leadership bid last week at the Goring Hotel, Westminster — cruelly close to Michael Portillo's home — by declaring that he wanted to inject some fun into Tory politics. Someone pointed out that the party had provided plenty of it over the past few years.

But for one of the six declared candidate in the Conservative party leadership race, things took a serious turn on Sunday, when former Home Secretary Michael Howard faced a direct challenge to his political integrity from two former Home Office colleagues.

With William Hague, the youngest contender, gaining ground among the party establishment, Ann Widdecombe, who is supporting Peter Lilley's bid, signalled her determination to revive the controversy surrounding the sacking of Derek Lewis as director of prisons in 1995. Although the MP would not elaborate, she was quoted as saying Mr Howard had "something of the night" in his character and would "do things that are not always sustainable" under pressure. She believes she can prove her case in the Lewis affair.

Ms Widdecombe plans to make a Commons statement or a similar pronouncement in the near future, despite being urged not to go public by Mr Lilley. Faced with a damaging character attack, Mr Howard, who denies any impropriety, did confirm on BBC TV's Breakfast With Frost that a row had occurred with his colleague. "Ann and I disagreed about the dismissal of Derek Lewis as head of the Prison Service.

"I had to overrule her because there was an independent report which made very serious criticisms of the Prison Service management from top to bottom. Ann felt very strongly about that. We disagreed," said Mr Howard.

A further problem for Mr Howard emerged on Sunday from another of his former junior ministers. Charles Wardle, who has made plain his dissatisfaction with Mr Howard's handling of the Lonrho-Mohamed Al Fayed takeover battle for Harrods. Mr Wardle was said to be planning to make a campaign issue of the dispute between the two men.

Meanwhile Mr Hague, the former Welsh Secretary, made clear his outright opposition to a single European currency except possibly in "30 or 40 years", as the horse-trading for the leadership intensified with the re-opening of Parliament last week.

However, the contest cannot be held until the middle of June at the earliest, and the process of electing a new 1922 backbench committee, whose executive organises the election, must first be initiated. The previous committee was all but wiped out in the election.

The outcome of the leadership contest will be decided by an extremely small electorate, the 165 Tory MPs who survived the May 1 massacre. The constituency party officials, peers and ordinary members are consulted but have no votes. Under party rules a candidate needs a majority of eligible voters plus 15 per cent to win outright. With 165 Tories eligible, that means 108.

The former Chancellor, Kenneth Clarke is believed to have the best chance of at least making inroads into Labour's lead at the next general election.

What this contest will reveal is whether the priority for the Conservative rump is to elect someone acceptable to the public or whether it is heading for years of ideological infighting.

Mr Clarke, the most pro-European and leftwing of those standing, has garnered considerable support, and his campaign managers claim to have a core vote of about 40 to 50 — the problem will be expanding beyond that. He is detested by the right: "Clarke's support is broad and soft, rather like Clarke," said an opponent.

On Monday Mr Clarke warned that lurch to the "hardline right" would render the party as unelectable against Tony Blair as Michael Foot was against Margaret Thatcher.

Mr Redwood a former Welsh secretary, will attract mainly Eurosceptics and, on paper, the "whipless ones", the militant wing comprising the likes of Sir Teddy Taylor and Teresa Gorman, who backed him when he stood against John Major. Former minister Tristan Garel-Jones, who will support Mr Clarke (but no longer has a vote), dismissed Mr Redwood as a disastrous choice. "The Conservative party doesn't have to ditch everything it believes in. What the party has to do is not choose a sort of Michael Foot option, which is John Redwood," he said.

Mr Lilley is not charismatic, but he is straight. "Michael Howard is terrified of Lilley," one rightwinger says.

That leaves Stephen Dorrell, the former Health Secretary, who has shifted from the Tory left towards free-market positions and Euroscepticism, angering old friends without winning new ones on the right. He may join in to stake a claim to a "big beast" post or may achieve the same by backing a centre-right rival.

The key question is how Portillo-ites split. Some claim 42 votes and predict they will all go to Mr Lilley. Others deride such talk. Mr Portillo appealed to the nationalist Tory wing; Mr Lilley has more libertarian credentials. Some Portillo fans may go for Mr Redwood.

Meanwhile a Guardian/ICM poll last week showed none of the candidates has excited much enthusiasm among the public. Asked who they would like to be Tory leader, 27 per cent said "none of them", while 19 per cent replied "don't know". Mr Clarke had 18 per cent support, with Mr Redwood second at 13 per cent

● Michael Heseltine was last week recovering from a successful angioplasty operation carried out at private London clinic.

The former deputy prime minister was transferred to the Harley Street Clinic after having been admitted to Horton hospital in Banbury, Oxfordshire, on May 3 suffering from chest pains. He underwent tests for angina.

After the health scare, Mr Heseltine said he would not be entering the Tory leadership contest.

New chancellor, new optimism

NEVER judge a Queen's Speech — or a Budget — by its leaks. Even so, Gordon Brown offers new hope. The Chancellor is preparing "the most radical welfare budget since the second world war". New bridges, which could reconnect Britain's deeply divided society, were detectable in the pre-budget mist. There were signals suggesting the two-tier society created by the Tories could be returned to a one-nation state. Unemployed youth, the long-term unemployed and single parents were all promised new work opportunities. There will be a boost for "foyer" schemes, under which the homeless are offered homes, work and training. The billions raised by council-house sales — forcibly frozen by the Tories — will be unfrozen to build new homes for the less well-off. There will be new taxes to deter fast-buck share speculators. New Labour this past week has been going out of its way to generate New Optimism.

The first thing to celebrate is the vision itself. Labour declined to provide one in the last five years. It was so terrified of being tagged the poor people's friend that it refused to provide an alternative goal to the harsh 21st century vision set out by the Conservatives. The Tory plan was unequivocal: the boundary between public and private provision — for pensions, long-term nursing care and social services — would be redrawn. Beveridge's universal services would be replaced by private insurance, employers or families. The welfare state in the 21st century would return to a 19th century model of Poor Law relief. Only the poor, unable to make private insurance contributions, would be protected by the state. Two-tier Britain would become even more deeply embedded and divided.

Now, at least, we have an overt aspiration from Labour to make Britain more equal. True, we still need the detailed plans and even more important the financial commitment, but the dream is there: "a modernised welfare state". Labour is right to be disturbed by the rise in dependency: from one in 12 people in 1979 to a staggering one in six last year. They are right to insist that the problem of youth and long-term unemployment will not be solved by a few months' work. Something much more fundamental is needed. Much more could be achieved for one-parent families. Fewer single mothers work in Britain than in any other European state. Yet 90 per cent want to work. Australia has demonstrated this can be achieved. Its JET (Jobs, Education and Training) scheme has moved thousands of single mothers into work. But it is not cheap. It requires childcare tax allowances or subsidies, training schemes, plus after-school clubs. In its first five years, JET cost taxpayers more than it saved.

Serious worries remain. The biggest concerns costs. Labour exaggerates the savings its welfare-to-work programmes will achieve. High-quality schemes — and only high-quality are effective — are expensive. More serious still is Labour's delusion that welfare-to-work will cap Britain's growing social security budget or end the widening inequality. It won't. David Piachaud, London School of Economics professor and former Downing Street adviser to the last Labour government, set out the figures last week. Less than one-tenth of the £100 billion social security budget goes on unemployed people — including one-parent families. Equally worrying, Labour's plan to restrict benefit rises to inflation will only increase the gap between rich and poor. Labour should stop labelling social security as a system of social failure. What would they prefer: the social insecurity promised by the Tories? As Piachaud argued, social security remains the most effective means of reducing poverty. Labour cannot duck that blunt truth.

For the record, the UK was 17th out of 21 OECD member states in the last international league table in proportion of GDP spent on social protection (social security, health and education). It was Britain that took the lead in Europe in cutting benefits, a move that has left the poorest tenth 13 per cent worse off in real terms than in 1979. A recent confidential report from Eurostat, the European Union statistics agency, revealed that Britain has more children living in poverty than any other European country. Even the Tories were embarrassed by its findings, refusing to publish the document.

Labour's biggest challenge is the obscene inequality that has been generated since 1979. Victorian diseases have returned to deprived communities. Death rates have been rising among the poor. It will take more than five years to repair the damage, but a major start must be made in this first five-year term. New ways of delivering services will be needed. New forms of collective provision should be tried — such as compulsory long-term nursing care insurance. But the central goal must be the restoration of a fairer society. Every policy change should come with an "impact statement" setting out the distributional effects of the change. And just what should a radical Budget include? Perhaps most important is a yardstick — a five-year poverty reduction target, debated in Parliament, with an annual report to monitor progress. That would put poverty at the top of the agenda and make its reduction difficult to dodge.

The endgame for Mobutu

THE MANNER of Mobutu's going — or rather his appearing not to go — is of a piece with his decades of misrule. The Central African summit in Gabon last week should have provided him with an easy way out — and no shortage of funds for his exile. The United States embassy in Kinshasa believes he is preparing to have millions of dollars transported out in two large suitcases, quite apart from the huge assets which are already abroad. Instead his "friends" at the Gabon summit — a bunch of discredited presidents who represent Africa's past rather than its future — are backing a complicated and devious plan to elect a constitutional successor in Kinshasa. The arrangement, which bypasses the mediation efforts of South Africa and others more in tune with new African reality, was rightly rejected by the Zairean "rebels" as absolute nonsense.

France's alacrity in backing the Gabon proposal is also of a piece with its malign historical role in this area: the only surprise is that it has not yet given up. French involvement in Rwanda had the deadly effect of condoning Hutu extremism. As if they had learned nothing from the experience, they then moved to prop up Africa's most corrupt dictator, first with covert military aid — Serbian mercenaries plus helicopters — and then with loaded diplomacy. There is an echo of Indochina 1954 as US diplomatic efforts now supplant and exclude those of France — however much the US envoy Bill Richardson may pay lip-service to the two countries' "joint leadership" of the mediation effort. The only positive role that France can play now is to keep the door open for Mobutu to flee to his villa near Nice — and encourage him to do so quickly.

It is, of course, right to urge a peaceful resolution to the Zairean civil war. The forces — still conventionally but by now misleadingly labelled "rebel" — of Laurent Kabila may already control three-quarters of the country: that is no reason to submit the capital to bloodshed. It is also entirely justified to observe — as many Zaireans have observed — that Kabila's forces have behaved at times with a mixture of brutality and weakness, which does not bode well for the future. South Africa's deputy president, Thabo Mbeki, is seeking another shipboard meeting: it is at least worth trying, though after the last fiasco the omens are not good. But in this situation — as elsewhere in the past when regimes have tottered on the brink — it is equally important to understand the finality of the moment and the inevitability of what will succeed it. A constitutional ploy in Kinshasa in a discredited parliament with dubious backers is likely to delay the outcome and precipitate more bloodshed.

The external backing behind Mr Kabila is transparent: Ugandan, Rwandan and Angolan soldiers play a significant role and reflect a broader regional backing. This is not the first time that outside forces have intervened to tackle insoluble ills on the African continent: Tanzania's toppling of Idi Amin comes to mind. And, it has to be said, the evil of Mobutu's Zaire was nurtured and prolonged by Western interests, which could have brought it to a much earlier conclusion. This new regional assertiveness — joined diplomatically by South Africa — reflects new patterns of power, post-apartheid and post-cold war, which will not end here. Zaire, once described by Franz Fanon as the trigger of Africa, is a central state in an interlocking pattern that has been badly weakened by its own deformed nature. We must hope that at the end of this process a government will emerge in Kinshasa that can command real support while allowing Zaire's regions the measure of autonomy on which effective government in a country of this size must be based. What is happening now is a prologue to this new drama, and the curtain must be brought down speedily on the past.

There's no such thing as an ethical free ride

Hugo Young

ROBIN COOK'S predecessors as Foreign Secretary, like pantomime dames, each produced a catchline to mark their presence on the stage. Both phrases had their comic aspect. Douglas Hurd kept on saying that Britain "punched above its weight". Malcolm Rifkind pronounced that we should be ready "to accept a loss of influence" to protect our interests: such was the depth to which Tory Europhobia sank him.

Robin Cook this week stated that his mission is to make Britain "a force for good in the world". Is this any more meaningful than what went before?

Cook's mission statement is arresting in several ways. For one thing, it doesn't start by waving the Union Jack. That comes second in the list of goals, after international security. Moreover, the flag, when hoisted, is deemed to follow trade, not vice versa. Exports and jobs are here defined as the domestic purpose of British foreign policy.

Most striking of all, the environment is raised by this Foreign Secretary to a higher place in the pecking order than it has ever occupied. Even so, to be a force for good, what Cook calls "the ethical dimension", is what matters. Advancing human rights will be "at the heart of our foreign policy," he said. How can he deliver on this promise?

Not long after Hurd got the job, he said something similar. Foreign policy included the pledge to keep a close eye on political reform as a pre-condition of British aid. While rewarding democratic governments, Hurd wrote, "we should penalise particularly bad cases of repression and abuse of human rights".

Before Cook's ethical dimension came what Hurd called "the moral imperative". It didn't last long. As the years passed, Hurd became a cold-eyed Metternich, explicitly dubious about the human rights dimension, fatigued, if not enraged, by moral imperatives, who finished up being judged by the High Court to have illicitly fused aid and arms-sales in the case of the Pergau dam.

But Hurd wasn't a bad man. Although a self-confident casuist, he always acted in the British interest, as he saw it. Robin Cook, on becoming his shadow, quite properly attacked him, yet the issues aren't going to be any easier for a Cook than they were for a Hurd, even though these two substantial politicians appear to start with different prejudices, as already shown by Labour's enthusiastic move to get a Europe-wide ban on the making and selling of land-mines.

Consider just two of the problems. First, arms sales, one of Britain's biggest export categories and a massive job provider. Plainly, by the Cook test, all customers for British arms should pass a human rights threshold, encompassing not only democracy but freedom from repression. Many buyers — Saudi Arabia, Indonesia — do not survive even mild scrutiny of these matters.

Indonesia is the instantly topical case: a purchaser which pretends the aircraft we sell it have no role in internal repression, and has hitherto basked in the indifference of an amoral government towards testing the truth or falsity of that claim.

The policy document Cook produced for the 1996 party conference painted the picture well. "While the Conservative overseas aid minister has regularly toured the developing world calling on poor countries to reduce their expenditure on arms... Conservative defence ministers have been pressing those self-same countries to purchase British weapons irrespective of their record on democracy and human rights."

How can that contradiction be effaced, other than by modifying the second goal defined in Monday's mission statement, which is "to promote British exports and boost British jobs"?

Take China, which openly despises UN attempts to make it commit itself to a global human rights standard. Treating China as a pawn between the macho rivalries of Bill Clinton and Newt Gingrich, Washington, which is the most important player, has no coherent policy. How can Britain supply a better one?

The largest obligation, which Britain alone could satisfy, would be to offer passports to all Hong Kongers who wanted them. A true human rights priority requires that much, even at this late stage, of Foreign Secretary Cook. But below this fanciful possibility, the trading relationship itself is unlikely to evoke from Labour any more principled a policy than from the Tories. And, arguably, why should it? If economic growth is an instrument of political liberation, how would boycotts and belligerence advance the cause of human rights?

THESE are hard questions. Aid and trade with some of the authoritarian tiger economies of east and south Asia pose others. The Saudi question raises many issues for a "moral" government, whether about arms sales or the sheltering of anti-regime Islamic extremists in London. Cook will require all his subtlety to find half-way proper answers that accord with his statement of aims. But two strands are already suggestive.

The first is openness. What ran through the Scott report on arms-to-Iraq, and the Pergau dam scandal, is the secrecy with which the arms trade is conducted. Whether Indonesia meets the requirements for arms sales is a matter worthy of public argument before, not after, contracts are signed. The invariable demands from purchasers that all deals should be confidential are not compatible with the kind of accountability that gives Britain some chance of being a model force for good in the world.

Opening up these matters would be commercially risky. Some sales would be lost. But if Cook's words this week, and his numerous commitments to higher standards than the Tories during the Scott debates, mean anything, they accept that danger. There's no such thing as an ethical free ride. When the choice lies between principles and jobs, Mr Cook will need to be encouraged not to betray his principles.

When Hurd talked about penalising human rights abuses, his constituency was never likely to pressure him to deliver. In Cook's case, both the man and the party demand more. In 1997, "ethical dimension" is not a pantomime performance.

Brown promises radical welfare Budget

Will Hutton, Patrick Wintour and William Keegan

THE CHANCELLOR of the Exchequer, Gordon Brown, is preparing to announce the most radical welfare Budget since the second world war, placing high employment and growth along with low inflation as explicit goals of economic policy, decisively raising public and private investment, while fighting long-term unemployment, poor housing and social exclusion.

Pencilled in for three possible dates, including June 10, the Budget will seek to rebalance the economy from consumption to investment. Mr Brown's confirmation of a sweeping Budget comes at the end of a startling week in which he handed control of interest rates to an independent Bank of England after raising them by 0.25 per cent.

In an interview with the Observer, Mr Brown said he had told Treasury officials to start a fundamental review of public spending. Meanwhile spending would be held — even for individual departments — to the tight ceilings established by the outgoing Chancellor.

But Mr Brown indicated that he planned immediate changes to capital gains tax and corporation tax, encouraging more long-term share ownership and higher investment. The Budget changes would be accompanied by a review of taxation to encourage investment and "long-termism". He is likely to include changes to the taxation of dividends and pensions.

He hinted that the Budget's windfall levy on the excess profits of privatised utilities would include British Telecom among its targets. He said latest estimates suggested it would raise more than the £3 billion ($4.8 billion) needed to fund his welfare-to-work programme.

Mr Brown expressed concern at the balance in the UK economy, saying: "Everyone should be concerned that we've had high levels of consumer demand but low levels of industrial output. We inherited consumer demand growing at 4 per cent, but industrial production is growing far below that."

He promised a medium-term growth strategy, to be developed alongside his inflation target of 2.5 per cent or below, and added that "high and sustainable levels of employment", the great objectives of the 1944 employment white paper, would form part of a new Treasury mission statement.

Mr Brown said he wanted to be judged on his success in helping to reshape the welfare state. "I am not interested in measures that just alleviate the problem of youth and long-term unemployment for a few months. I'm interested in developing a welfare state built around the work ethic. In 1997, there have been 600,000 young people aged under 25 without work. How is it a society like ours can get itself into a position where we are wasting talents like this?"



ILLUSTRATION: CHRIS RIDDELL

Apart from the welfare-to-work programme, he is preparing to back changes to the benefit structure designed to remove disincentives to work for jobless households and single parents. He also indicated he would not be reversing the Conservatives' cuts in lone-parent premium and one-parent benefit introduced last month, arguing that other government training measures would increase the chances of single parents finding work.

The Chancellor also promised a bill that would release over time £5 billion of capital receipts from council-house sales, kick-starting a massive social housing programme. "The principle behind council-house sales receipts is you can release money that is already the Government's without having to add to the tax burden of the country," he said.

He insisted that full employment had to be built from a platform of business and monetary stability, claiming that the causes of high inflation and high unemployment were identical.

He said the level and quality of long-term investment in Britain was not good enough. Other countries had two rates of capital gains tax, or tapered it so shareholders paid less the longer they held shares.

Mr Brown predicted that his long-term review of public spending would be more effective than the one attempted by Michael Portillo when he was Chief Secretary. "A lot of people have not understood there is no public spending round this year or next, 1998-99, so the Treasury will be free to set in place a long-term review of public spending instead of bargaining about existing spending patterns for the short term."

However, one important aim of the review is to establish a firm base from which spending in priority areas can be significantly expanded over the last three years of the Parliament, while identifying others where spending growth should be restrained or cut.

Mr Brown confirmed there would be four options for the young unemployed — a £60-a-week subsidy to employers who offered a straight job, a premium to state benefit if work is taken in the voluntary sector, jobs in a new environmental task force, and relaxation of the 16-hour rule to allow youngsters to train without loss of benefit. He also promised a big expansion of "the foyer scheme", in which the young homeless are given shelter on condition they undertake training.

The Chancellor said he was trying to open up Treasury decision-making as part of the Government's constitutional reform programme.

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Labour puts faith in George

Can the British economy really be run on autopilot, asks **Larry Elliott**

THE biggest change to Labour in its wilderness years was that it gradually ceased to have enemies. Whereas "Old" Labour was always willing to name its enemies — the bankers, the gnomes of Zurich, the rich, the ruling class, the public schools, the scions of industry — "New" Labour has put a stop to all that.

Its only enemies are concepts: inefficiency, waste, anti-social behaviour, nostalgia and incompetence.

This change of emphasis is important because it underpins Labour's technocratic approach to running Britain. Once you have dispensed with the idea that conflict is natural — even healthy — and that there are no real class or sectional interests, the answer to every problem is to call in the experts. It makes perfect sense to hand over interest rates to the Bank of England and its governor, Eddie George, and to call in the head of BP as minister for export promotion. They are, after all, likely to make a better fist of things than elected politicians.

Tony Benn's diaries contain an interesting example of how times have changed. Benn recalls, in his first few weeks as Industry Secretary, being visited by Sir Kenneth Keith, who revealed how he had come to be made chairman of the then nationalised Rolls-Royce by Ted Heath. A belligerent Keith told Benn that he had agreed to take the job only provided he was not "buggered about by junior ministers and civil servants and officials".

Benn replied by telling Keith how he had become Secretary of State, first by winning the support of the voters of Bristol and then by being appointed by the Prime Minister. "While I am in charge I will not accept chairmen of nationalised industries indicating to me that they won't be mucked about by junior ministers and civil servants. Rolls-Royce is a nationalised company and must be accountable for what it does."

Contrast this with Gordon Brown's language when he announced operational independence for the Bank last week. It was important to "remove the suspicion that short-term party political considerations are influencing the setting of interest rates", and it was "increasingly clear that the present arrangements for policy-making are not generating the confidence that is necessary".

Mr Brown fervently believes that his shake-up of monetary policy offers the prospect of better economic performance with proper accountability. We shall see.

Independence for the Bank represents the triumph of the technocrat, the only person with any real importance in a world where the entire political class agrees on certain inviolate concepts — that Britain has to punch its weight in Europe, and needs to be a skills superpower, the drive for competitiveness, that defeating inflation is necessary for economic success, that the private sector is best; that every problem is best solved by getting round the table and rolling up sleeves, that there is no role for class conflict, and that unfettered capital and free trade maximise outcomes in the new world order.

There are umpteen reasons to be suspicious of this de-politicisation, not least because de-politicisation is, in itself, a political choice. But let's start with the obvious one — we are suckers for anything that smacks of novelty.

The British economy is like a couple who have lived together for years and have settled down into a routine. But every now and then they feel the need to spice up their lives. Out comes The Joy Of Sex and they experiment with zeal. The more weird and wonderful the perversion, the more the British policy-making establishment likes it.

Over the years, Britain has tried every variation going. Keynesianism, indicative planning, prices and incomes policy, dashes for growth, membership of the European Community, monetarism, floating exchange rates, fixed exchange rates, shadowing the mark. An independent central bank has been the most universally acclaimed policy move since the papers were full of praise for Mrs Thatcher's long overdue and supremely wise decision to take Britain into the ERM.

In the end, we need to face facts. Most of these deviations don't work; nearly all involve inordinate pain. Muddling through as we did pretty successfully after Black Wednesday is what we are best at. It's the equivalent of fumbling around under the duvet with the lights out.

BUT there's more to the triumph of technocracy than mere faddism. There is the sense that Government's role in an age of unfettered capital flows is much diminished. Trade policy is set by the World Trade Organisation, social policy should be handled by Brussels, central bankers can keep inflation low. Labour doesn't want to take the big decisions: it wants them taken off its hands so it can concentrate on micro-changes and be blame-free if things go wrong.

The problem with this approach is that, logically, there need be no end to it. The Chancellor's assertion that governments have played ducks and drakes with monetary policy in the run-up to elections is actually quite hard to substantiate. It wasn't true in 1992, 1987, 1983 or 1979. That Kenneth Clarke rejected the Bank's demands since Christmas for a 0.25 per cent rate rise hardly makes him a wild inflationist.

Indeed, there is a far stronger case for saying that the real dirty politics has been in the field of fiscal policy, rather than monetary policy. Chancellors are far more likely to use pre-election periods to despoil the public finances with tax cuts and spending increases than they are to risk the wrath of the markets with interest-rate cuts.

In the past four elections, it has not been a question of *whether* the Conservative government has been irresponsible with the Budget, but just how irresponsible. The only way that Mr Brown can be sure he will resist the temptation would be to sub-contract fiscal policy to that nice Andrew Dilnot at the Institute for Fiscal Studies. He certainly has a longer track record of getting it right on tax than the Bank of England has on interest rates.

It is time to look at this whole question of stability. There are two fallacies here. The first is that it is possible to flatten out the business cycle and prevent shocks to the system. History shows that you cannot. The second is that it would be a good thing to do.

In a sense, this is counter-intuitive, because most people assume that the greater the stability, the better the outlook for growth. The evidence for this is scanty, though. The great era of innovative American capitalism between 1880 and 1930 was not the product of stability engendered by central bankers — rather it was an era of mass immigration, the rule of the frontier and protectionism.

The obsession with stability is part of the pretence that conflict is no longer necessary nor desirable. What is happening is not that conflict has been eliminated, but that it is moved from the centre of the political arena, where it belongs, to the fringes, where it does not. As such, making economics into a conflict-free zone is doubly dangerous, because into the vacuum comes social authoritarianism.

It is a dangerous conceit to believe that change is possible without there being winners and losers. We are not all in the same boat, and never have been.

In Brief

GUINNESS and Grand Metropolitan announced a $33 billion merger that will create the world's biggest spirits maker, GMG Brands. Up to 2,000 jobs are likely to be lost.

BRITISH PETROLEUM has appointed Peter Sutherland as caretaker chairman after Sir David Simon resigned to become UK Minister of Trade in Europe.

HISTORY'S biggest fraudster, the fallen shipping magnate Abbas Gokal, was jailed by an Old Bailey judge for a record 14 years after he was convicted of swindles totalling $1.2 billion.

BRE-X Minerals, the firm at the centre of a gold-strike scandal in Borneo, received Canadian court protection from its creditors and announced that John Felderhof, its exploration chief, had resigned.

FOREIGN EXCHANGES

	Sterling rates May 12	Sterling rates April 28
Australia	2.0851-2.0877	2.0792-2.0815
Austria	19.43-19.45	19.72-19.74
Belgium	56.96-57.08	57.84-57.90
Canada	2.1570-2.2593	2.2696-2.2715
Denmark	10.51-10.52	10.67-10.68
France	9.30-9.31	9.45-9.48
Germany	2.7615-2.7641	2.8029-2.8051
Hong Kong	12.57-12.85	12.57-12.58
Ireland	1.0706-1.0721	1.0522-1.0541
Italy	2,738-2,742	2,782-2,784
Japan	192.39-192.66	205.35-205.60
Netherlands	3.1063-3.1094	3.1641-3.1673
New Zealand	2.3338-2.3376	2.3642-2.3660
Norway	11.51-11.53	11.48-11.50
Portugal	278.27-278.52	281.03-281.25
Spain	233.60-233.83	236.60-236.86
Sweden	12.47-12.49	12.61-12.63
Switzerland	2.3312-2.3339	2.3850-2.3875
USA	1.6243-1.6253	1.6230-1.6238
ECU	1.4205-1.4221	1.4374-1.4390

FTSE 100 Share index up [illegible] at [illegible]. FTSE 250 index up [illegible] at [illegible]. Gold up [illegible] at [illegible].

Chirac's form holds little content

COMMENT
Pascale Robert-Diard

IN AN article published by 14 regional newspapers on May 7, President Jacques Chirac called on the French to renew their "confidence" in a society "whose key elements are initiative and solidarity". It was his first intervention in the campaign for the general election due to be held at the end of May.

What Chirac was in fact doing was writing a letter to the ruling majority's electorate. It was a letter to the good old rightwing constituency he knows so well, and one which, like the rather conventional and down-in-the-mouth missives that relatives exchange once a year, was not of great interest.

The news is always the same: times are hard, other people are the problem, the neighbours opposite are being a nuisance, maybe things will get better tomorrow, we can have another go, but everyone will have to pull their weight.

Imagine how many hours of hard thinking, writing, correcting, polishing up and rereading those few lines must have cost Chirac's spin doctors. Almost three weeks into the campaign, they felt it was time to make an impression on public opinion.

The question was: what medium? Television? Too ceremonial. A public meeting? Too early, too militant, and not presidential enough at this stage. The written word? Just the job. The written word lingers on: it can be read and reread directly, without being polluted by media pundits. But where? The national press? In France, it does not have enough readers and is too Parisian-orientated — in other words, anathema. The regional press was ideal, with its 4-5 million readers who can be reached in their homes or at the local café.

'We must prepare the French for a single government!'

Once the form was settled, there was the problem of content. Chirac needed to mobilise, though not too obviously, a rightwing electorate that has shown symptoms of incredulity and disgruntlement since the start of the campaign.

He knew how to deal with that: he just needed to lash out at his opponents. So he went for the Socialists. He did not name them of course, because that would be unworthy of a president, but simply relied on the electorate to recognise those who had "nationalised companies", "run up debts" and "increased taxes".

As there was just a chance he might be misinterpreted, he threw in two other issues that always galvanise the rightwing electorate: "illegal immigration" and "law and order".

That marked a real change of approach from Chirac's television appearance on April 21, when he explained why he was dissolving parliament, referred to those who challenged the "basic principles" of the republic and denounced "calls to hatred". His enemy then was the National Front. This time it was the left, now that the far right has become a mere rival.

The next bit was trickier. There are company bosses who complain regularly about the state, the technocrats, red tape and a punitive tax system. They are people who applaud the militant free-market views of the former finance minister, Alain Madelin. Chirac told them the government was going to "reduce the charges on all those who work", "encourage innovation" and keep government spending under tight control.

But rightwing voters also include "ordinary" people, who are frightened by globalisation and worry whether their children will manage to get secure jobs as government employees. They know full well what unemployment means. Chirac has the knack of talking to such people. It worked during the 1995 presidential election campaign, so why the hell shouldn't he try it again?

There was just one more point on his list that needed to be ticked off: 50 per cent of voters are women. Women! What would one do without them, especially three weeks ahead of the first round of the election, which also happens to be Mother's Day?

Women, he wrote, "particularly embody modern, caring values", and their position in political and economic life has an important bearing on "harmony and efficiency". All said in four heartfelt lines. Perfect.

The last golden rule for this kind of exercise is that one should wind up by taking the moral high ground. On April 21, Chirac had talked about the need for "political leaders" to act with moral probity. Three weeks on, he had shifted his ground curiously, talking only about the ethics of nationalised companies. His mention of "financial scandals" and "taxpayers' money" were clear allusions to the misdemeanours of the left. On the right, everything was of course hunky-dory.

All he needed was a conclusion. What about a mention of 2000? He was ready for that "historic *rendez-vous*", oh yes.

(May 8)

Islamists target trains in Algeria

Jean-Pierre Tuquoi in Algiers

A WEEK ago at least 20 people were killed when a train was blown up and derailed a few kilometres outside the Algerian capital, Algiers. A few days later, on the May 1 bank holiday, a parcel bomb was used for the first time on Algerian railways. The bomb discovered that day exploded, but caused no casualties. It was a miracle that went totally unreported by the government-controlled press.

"Passengers alerted the ticket collector when they saw an abandoned cardboard box filled with peas in one of the carriages," a railwayman explained. "The ticket collector couldn't find the owner. When he delicately pushed the peas aside with his fingers, he found a metal box. He immediately assumed it was a bomb. When the train stopped at Chiffa, the package was isolated on the platform.

"Police were called by telephone but no one answered. The phone at the gendarmerie was constantly engaged. And the patriots [self-defence militias set up by the regime] replied that they were not specialists. In the end the train set off again. It was then that the bomb went off." The engine was undamaged by the explosion, so the driver was able to drive to the next station, Gué de Constantine, where he reported the incident.

Last week's bomb is yet further proof of the Algerian railways' tragic inability to cope with the situation. It is impossible to find out if attacks on trains are on the increase or not. All that one railway executive would say was: "A lot of our trains burn."

The technique used up to now by Islamist gangs was to stop trains in open country, pick out any soldiers or policemen among the passengers, shoot them and burn the train. In the past few months they have used more rudimentary methods, blowing up trains and then shooting any passengers that dare show their faces.

The authorities have taken purely one-off countermeasures. The first trains of the day leaving Algiers and Blida were cancelled last winter for security reasons: they left their respective stations before dawn.

Goods trains, particularly those operating during the night, and passenger trains on main lines have armed escorts. Their drivers get a bonus. Nothing, however, has been done for suburban traffic. Each morning in Algiers, almost 10,000 people board trains without being certain they will arrive safely.

Most attacks on suburban trains seem to take place on particular sections of the network. On the eastern network between Algiers and El Afrouh, the dangerous zone begins at Gué de Constantine, whose colonial-style station was burned down at the beginning of the year.

Near the station, large numbers of deprived people cram into shanty towns that have neither water nor schools. Long-standing inhabitants of Gué de Constantine allege that it is in the shanty towns that the "terrorists" are recruited.

(May 4-5)

Gas deal puts squeeze on Burma's Karens

Jean-Claude Pomonti in Bangkok

NEITHER humanitarian concerns, nor environmental considerations, nor economic sanctions such as the ban on further investment in Burma announced by the United States at the end of April are likely to make Bangkok or Rangoon backtrack on a well-advanced joint venture: a 650-km pipeline that will link the offshore gas deposits of Yanada, in the Gulf of Martaban, with a power station at Ratchaburi, on the Gulf of Thailand.

The reason is simple. By 2000, the completed scheme will earn Burma $200 million a year (equivalent to a quarter of the country's total 1996 export earnings), and increase Thailand's power production capacity by 20 per cent.

The frontline victims of this ambitious project have been the Mons and above all the Karens, two ethnic groups living in the thinly populated area where the pipeline crosses the Burmese peninsula.

After breaking off talks with the Karen National Union (KNU), the Burmese army has been carrying out a brutal offensive since February against the last weakened remnants of an insurgency that started in 1949. The number of Karen refugees in Thailand has risen from 20,000 in 1988, when the Burmese army bludgeoned its way back into power, to 120,000 today.

Some 20,000 Karens have fled the Burmese army's offensive and camped near the pipeline route on the Thai side of the border. The Thai army has turned back all male adults. On April 30, some American senators asked the secretary of state, Madeleine Albright, to urge Bangkok to halt the forced repatriation of refugees.

Bangkok is unlikely to backpedal at this stage. Work has just begun on the section of the pipeline running from the Thai border to Ratchaburi. The operation of the Yanada deposit and its pipeline, which is in the hands of the oil company Total on the Burmese side, is only the first part of a grander scheme. There are already plans to build a second pipeline linking Ratchaburi to a Burmese offshore deposit at Yetagun in the Andaman Sea, which is operated by the American company Texaco.

Thai firms are already hoping to construct a harbour at Tavoy, just south of the Total pipeline's Burmese section. Tavoy will shortly be linked to Ye, north of the pipeline, by a railway line being built by the Burmese army. The army's recourse to forced labour has been regularly denounced by international humanitarian agencies.

If the Tavoy project takes shape, a highway will be built across the peninsula. This is of particular interest to Thailand because three-quarters of its maritime traffic with Europe has to make a detour via the Strait of Malacca.

Historically the Burmese and Thais have rarely got on well together. The ceasefires concluded by Rangoon with some 15 rebel movements — though not the KNU — in recent years have resulted in a re-equipped Burmese army being present all along the 2,400km border between the two countries.

This is not much to the liking of Thailand's generals. But too much is at stake for Bangkok not to accept as a fact of life the disappearance of the buffer zones once formed by rebel-held territory along the border.

Rangoon has become a favoured partner. The Thai prime minister, General Chaovalith Yongchaiyudh, makes no secret of his determination to maintain good relations with his Burmese "comrades in arms".

The situation seems hopeless for the remnants of the rebel movement. The Burmese army protects sites where work has already begun or is about to begin, even if it means moving whole villages and imposing forced labour on the local population.

As the rainy season begins at the end of May, the Burmese army has already announced that its final operations to "mop up" the KNU will take place during the next dry season, from November to next May.

The now weakened and isolated KNU said earlier this month it had given up any idea of sabotaging the pipeline and was ready to restart talks with Rangoon.

But that is not necessarily good news for the Karen refugees. Whatever happens, co-operation between Rangoon and Bangkok suggests they will be forced to return home one day, to areas now controlled by the Burmese army, without any guarantee of safety.

(May 7)



Harrowing task . . . Robert Badinter, the former justice minister

Betrayed by the Bar

Josyane Savigneau

Un Antisémitisme Ordinaire — Vichy Et Les Avocats Juifs (1940-1944)
by Robert Badinter
Fayard 258pp 110 francs

ROBERT BADINTER shows in this short, clinical book about the "ordinary anti-Semitism" of the legal profession under the Vichy regime that it was a corporation that up to the the second world war proudly presented itself as an upholder of republican values, a protector of liberties and the last refuge of the persecuted.

Yet when the profession was asked by Vichy to strike Jewish lawyers off the rolls, it showed itself more than willing — conveniently forgetting it had once seen its task as the defence of the individual.

"It would be hard to underestimate the depth of feeling aroused in [Jewish parents], who felt a mixture of gratitude towards France, which had turned their child into a lawyer, and love for the child, of whom they were proud," Badinter writes. That pride made their distress all the greater when they were rejected.

The long road that led to their rejection, then their extermination, is meticulously charted by Badinter. Facts, figures and testimonies reveal the "logic" behind it all — a link between the mounting xenophobia of the prewar years and a willingness to "turn Jews into pariahs".

The lawyers under threat so loved their country and the law that their first reaction was one of incredulity. "Racism has become the law of the new state," wrote one of them. "What a disgrace! All my illusions have been shattered."

Pierre Masse, an eminent barrister, wrote to Marshal Pétain, whom he had known during the first world war, as follows: "I have read the decree which states that Jews may no longer be officers. Would you be so kind as to let me know if I should go and remove the stripes from my brother . . . son-in-law . . . and nephew [all of whom had died in action].

Badinter also reproduces a terrifyingly sober letter sent to him in 1995 by the barrister, Yves Jouffa: "I was arrested by two French policemen at my home on August 20, 1941, and was one of the first people to be sent to the Drancy transit camp. The next day, 50 Paris barristers — some of them very well known: Pierre Masse, Gaston Crémieux and Théodore Valensi — arrived at the camp. They received an ovation from the internees, most of them workers and craftsmen from the 11th *arrondissement* in Paris . . .

"A few months later, the president of the Bar, Charpentier, came to the camp to tell his detained colleagues that they had been struck off the rolls. He said not a word of regret, explanation or excuse. When he left, I saw several lawyers weeping. They included men who had been decorated in both wars."

If the French had really asked themselves the right questions about the xenophobia that was accepted by the whole of society, instead of singling out a few scapegoats or creating a smokescreen of stereotyped arguments whose only effect has been to encourage collective amnesia, they might perhaps never have witnessed the "return of the repressed" that is sweeping France in the form of a contamination of minds by the far-right leader, Jean-Marie Le Pen.

Historians, as numerous references in Badinter's book attest, have already highlighted the inglorious role played by the Bar under Vichy. But it was only right that a leading Jewish lawyer such as Badinter, who was called to the Bar after the war, should stick up for his humiliated elder colleagues (he was taken under the wing of one of them, Henry Torrès), many of whom died because they loved the country that abandoned them.

It was a task which Badinter, the man who, when justice minister, abolished the death penalty in France, owed it to himself to undertake, however harrowing it must have been.

(April 25)

A lifeline for Yiddish writing

Rachel Ertel, the editor of Domaine Yiddish, a series of books translated from Yiddish into French, talks to **Marion Van Renterghem**

THE JEWS of eastern Europe had only one territory: the Yiddish language. The Holocaust and, in a different way, the Soviet clampdown on the Jews destroyed that last patch of territory.
Is Domaine Yiddish an anthology of a culture that is already dead?

For European Jews the Yiddish language was, as you say, a substitute for territory. It was a homeland which they carried about with them on the soles of their shoes. It was a culture which thrived from the turn of the century on and above all during the years following the 1917 Revolution in Russia, before being stamped out by Stalinism like all other minority cultures.

Paradoxically, the more open, democratic society of Western cities where Yiddish was well established — Paris, London, Berlin, Vienna and above all New York — did not help it to thrive either. The dominant culture in those societies exerted an attractive force which contributed to its absorption, then dissolution.

But it was the Holocaust which exterminated the conveyors of Yiddish when it exterminated the Jews. As a result, the survivors were so traumatised by feelings of guilt that they regarded their language as a forbidden language. It had become taboo to speak it.

All those factors helped to wrench Yiddish away from Yiddish speakers and force them into silence. That is why I felt it was so urgent to teach the language and start this book series,

What are your criteria when it comes to choosing your titles?

I wanted to correct the quaint image that some Yiddish literature has, so I gave priority to texts with a modern touch, especially those dating from the Symbolist and Futurist-Expressionist periods. I've published classical writers such as Sholem Aleichem and Sholem Asch, but also Lamed Shapiro, Bergelson, Kulbak, Rabon, Rosenfeld, Zeitlin, Warszawski, Mehuha Ram [Ertel's mother] and poets such as Sutzkever.

It was above all important to have them translated directly from the original, which is not as obvious as it might seem. The only French versions of works by Isaac Bashevis Singer, for example who wrote exclusively in Yiddish, are translations of his English translations.

Were the community of language and the culture of the diaspora strong enough to make Yiddish literature distinct from the literatures of the countries where it flourished — Russia, Germany, the United States and so on?

The phenomenon is more complicated than that. A text might be written in Russia, published in Poland and read in the United States before finding its way back to Russia. It was in the Slav countries that Yiddish became most lastingly established — it was strongly influenced by Russian and Polish literature.

But the flow of emigrants to the United States and the major capitals of Europe introduced other elements. Yiddish literature is the result of that network of influences and constant interaction.

For most people, Yiddish remains an inaccessible language which has died out for lack of descendants. There are thought to be about 1 million Yiddish speakers in the world, whereas they numbered almost 12 million before the second world war.

The aim of my book series is to put across the message that Yiddish literature, far from being the product of a ghetto culture, could not be more open and cosmopolitan. This can be seen in the language itself: it is the result of an alchemy that turned its various components — Hebrew, German, Romance and Slavonic — into something totally original. In other words, the Yiddish language is a metaphor for the Jewish existence.

The paradox is that after borrowing so much from the rest of the world Yiddish literature remains isolated and little known. My series is also a way of paying back the debt Yiddish literature owes to the societies where it existed.

There are no living writers in your series. Is there any prospect of a renaissance of Yiddish literature, given that the language is now mainly kept alive by those who reject literature as such, in other words the ultra-religious?

I don't think a renaissance is on the cards. Paradoxically, there's more life in Yiddish writing than in Yiddish reading. There are a few authors writing in Yiddish in Israel. For a literature to live, it needs not only a living readership but a social foundation. The battle is lost the moment young men stop using Yiddish to chat up young women.

As for the appropriation of Yiddish by the ultra-religious, I'm more optimistic. There will be rebels and writers among them. Yiddish literature was profane in origin — it sprang up as a reaction against the traditional Orthodox world.

When David Ben-Gurion, founder of Israel, decided that Hebrew should be its national language, he too rejected Yiddish.

The so-called language war goes back further than political Zionism. It began at the end of the 18th century, when believers in the philosophy of Enlightenment advocated a return to Hebrew in intellectual fields and a process of linguistic assimilation for everyday matters.

Yiddish gradually imposed itself as both an everyday and an intellectual language. Then, when Israel was created, it was rejected along with everything else that reminded people of the diaspora. Today there is the beginning of a reverse trend, with a quest for the roots of the diaspora, which, in the case of Ashkenazim, is accompanied by a renewal of Yiddish teaching. But here again it's an academic renaissance.

No culture, no people can get over a genocide. One of the tragic aspects of the whole question — which poses a terrible challenge to me — is that the Yiddish language and literature were annihilated just as they had reached their creative apogee.

But there is a veritable treasure trove of Yiddish literature from the 16th century onwards just waiting to be discovered. The series which Liana Levi has decided to publish is an undertaking of some urgency. Literary texts are the only trace left by the Ashkenazi world. And as that world can no longer be couched in its own language, it is up to other languages to pass it on.

(May 3)

Testimony of the hunted

Marion Van Renterghem

On Ne Peut Pas Se Plaindre (Rezidentsè)
by Oser Warszawski
translated from Yiddish by Marie Warszawski, Lydie Lachenal and Angélique Lévi
Editions Liana Levi 128pp 98 francs

THERE is one thing Oser Warszawski never let on — that in 1943 he was writing, in novel form and at the risk of his life, an account of his own experiences as they unfolded, or "as he waited".

As he waited for what? Naphtali Cheminère, the central character of On Ne Peut Pas Se Plaindre who is very closely based on the author himself, is wrong-footed by fate and keeps on repeating with apparent scepticism, as he gets closer and closer to the unspeakable: "On ne peut pas se plaindre" (One can't complain).

He, like his creator, is briefly forced to stay in a Provençal village before going on to live elsewhere, like a hunted animal, discreetly observing everyday life and keeping his ears open for yet another rumour of a police swoop.

Like Warszawski and other anonymous figures who all vaguely suspect they will die the same way, he delights in false alarms, gets on a train without a pass and sips an apéritif, trying to fight back his own lucidity "as he waits".

Warszawski did not know he would be handed over to the Germans in May 1944 and murdered in Auschwitz five months later at the age of 46. He did not know that the manuscript of On Ne Peut Pas Se Plaindre would miraculously survive him.

He did not know, either, that he would be not only one of the greatest Yiddish avant-garde writers, but the only Jewish witness of events during the occupation of France to have left a day-by-day, first-hand account of his experiences as he went from city to city.

On Ne Peut Pas Se Plaindre is a novel one reads with bated breath. It is written as though it were an act of survival, with a humour born of despair, by a man on his final uncertain journey.

(May 3)

Le Monde
Directeur: Jean-Marie Colombani

The Washington Post

Clinton Acts To Aid Haiti At Summit

Peter Baker in Bridgetown

EVEN as he celebrated the triumph of democracy in the Caribbean during a summit here on Saturday last week, President Clinton quietly moved to shore up the fragile stability of Haiti, the island nation where he has invested the most energy in the region and has the most at stake.

After a largely amiable summit focusing on trade and drugs with 15 Caribbean leaders, Clinton met with Haitian President Rene Preval to lay the groundwork for keeping U.N. peacekeeping forces in the turbulent country for at least another four months.

"We are determined to do whatever we can to see that democracy survives and thrives. President Preval is as well," Clinton said before the half-hour meeting, in which aides said Clinton signaled his support for the idea of an extension and discussed ways of structuring the mission.

About 1,300 Canadian and Pakistani troops remain in Haiti to enforce order and protect its vulnerable democracy; another 450 U.S. troops mostly perform support duties such as construction. Already extended five times, the deployment is now scheduled to end July 31, but Clinton and Preval talked about leaving the troops in place until at least November.

In some ways, Clinton's support for another extension could be seen as bowing to the inevitable, given the lack of economic and political progress in Haiti as it struggles to build a civil society from the remnants of decades of authoritarian rule. But it also will provide new ammunition to critics in Congress and elsewhere who fault Clinton's foreign policy not only in Haiti but also in Bosnia, where deadlines for withdrawing U.N. troops similarly have come and gone.



President Clinton speaks in Bridgetown, Barbados, last Saturday during a summit with Caribbean leaders PHOTO: GREG GIBSON

Haiti occupies a particularly important place on Clinton's international agenda because he considered the restoration of democracy there during a peaceful U.S.-led occupation in 1994 to be a signature accomplishment of his first term. The last thing the U.S. president wants, according to aides, is for that to unravel.

But U.S. officials have been frustrated by the stop-and-start movement toward economic and social reform. Among other things, officials said that the 5,200-strong civilian police force established in July 1995 is not ready to assume control by itself, that privatization plans have not progressed far enough, and that little has been done to alleviate grinding poverty.

In recent months, international agencies have suspended tens of millions of dollars in aid because of governmental foot-dragging over the sale of nationalized industries; because legislative elections drew less than 10 percent of voters; and because police were accused of brutality that included 15 summary executions.

The 16 leaders at the meeting signed a document laying out a variety of areas on which they plan to work together, including joint efforts to crack down on drug trafficking, gun running, immigrant smuggling and money laundering. Among other things, Clinton plans to provide aircraft and Coast Guard cutters to help the islands intercept illegal narcotics.

Amnesty for Political Refugees Refused

ON THURSDAY last week President Clinton rebuffed pleas from Central American leaders seeking amnesty for immigrants who fled their region during the civil wars of the 1980s, *writes Peter Baker in San Jose*. But he tried to assuage their concerns by vowing humane enforcement of a tough new U.S. immigration law.

During a summit meeting with fellow heads of state in the Costa Rican capital, the presidents of El Salvador and Nicaragua pressed Clinton to come to the aid of hundreds of thousands of people who sought refuge in the United States a decade ago and face the prospect of expulsion now that peace and stability have arrived. The new law, which took effect on April 1, could affect about 300,000 Central Americans in the United States.

Clinton made clear that amnesty is not an option, according to participants in the closed-door session. However, in private and later during public remarks, the president repeatedly expressed sympathy for the plight of the immigrants who came legally, comparing them to boat people who escaped Vietnam in the 1970s. And he promised to avoid any Draconian roundups while he attempts to persuade Congress to soften the impact of the law, which he signed during last fall's campaign.

"There will be no mass deportations and no targeting of Central Americans under this law," Clinton said at a post-summit news conference. "I am working with Congress to implement the new law so that it does not produce these unintended results."

While disappointed not to hear more specific assurances, Central American leaders said they are convinced that Clinton understands their positions and believe he will translate his soothing words into tangible results.

"It is very encouraging for us to hear the profoundly humane position that he adopts when he looks at the people who have had so much pain," said President Armando Calderon Sol of El Salvador.

The issue resonates strongly here because of the imminent threat to Central American immigrants in the United States and the wide-ranging impact their deportation could have, not only on them and their families but also on their home countries.

Those immigrants, who entered the United States under rules intended to grant them temporary sanctuary from political upheaval at home, collectively send home $1.5 billion a year to relatives in El Salvador and Nicaragua. Analysts say shipping them home en masse could overwhelm Central American labor markets, which would not have enough jobs for all of them.

The new law has a variety of provisions intended to curb illegal immigration and was not aimed specifically at the Central Americans. But they became endangered when officials focused on a provision that allows the government to exempt only 4,000 people a year from deportation. The administration is postponing the effective date of that cap until October 1 while negotiating with congressional leaders to find a compromise.

U.S Probes Mexico Money Laundering

John Ward Anderson, Molly Moore and Douglas Farah

THE U.S. Justice Department is investigating allegations that some of Mexico's top business and political power brokers used a Mexican government agency for criminal enterprises that included laundering drug profits and other illicit money through the agency's U.S. bank accounts and contracts, sources familiar with the probe said.

A focus of the investigation is whether Raul Salinas de Gortari, older brother of former president Carlos Salinas de Gortari, used the agency — a federal food program known as Conasupo — to shield cocaine shipments into the United States and to launder drug money for the Gulf cartel through the agency's U.S. bank accounts and purchasing contracts, the sources said. At the time, the Gulf cartel was Mexico's biggest and most powerful drug mafia, led by Juan Garcia Abrego.

Raul Salinas was a high-ranking official at the food agency for part of his brother's six-year administration and is now in prison pending trial on charges of murder and illegal enrichment.

One source familiar with the investigation said the agency became "the Salinas administration's slush fund," where money from all sorts of corrupt political, governmental, business and narcotics dealings was amassed and parceled out.

The investigation does not mark the first time that current or former Mexican officials — including Raul Salinas — have been targeted by corruption probes. But the new allegations involving Conasupo suggest the possibility that the machinery of an entire governmental agency was put at the disposal of drug dealers. Mexican officials have been seeking to portray the nation's government institutions as fundamentally uncorrupted by narcotics trafficking.

"There was an infrastructure within Mexico that includes Colombian and Mexican narcotics traffickers and high-level government officials acting in concert, and that's what we're going after," a source familiar with the investigation said. "Everything was viewed as a cash cow, and everything the PRI [Mexico's ruling Institutional Revolutionary Party] did was viewed as an opportunity to steal money. The superstructure of what made this thing tick — that's what we're looking at."

The investigation, which began about 18 months ago but has rapidly expanded in the last three months, is being conducted jointly by the FBI, the U.S. Drug Enforcement Administration (DEA) and the Treasury Department, and is being overseen by the Justice Department. While the principal targets of the probe are Mexican nationals, the alleged crimes under investigation — drug trafficking, money laundering and others — took place in the United States.

The existence of such an extensive probe was a closely guarded secret, at least partly because of its political sensitivity in the months preceding President Clinton's visit to Mexico last week. No one involved in the investigation was willing to be quoted by name because of a gag order imposed by the Justice Department.

Sources said that as the investigation expands, evidence is being collected that could implicate some of the most powerful people in Mexico and the PRI, which has ruled this country for almost seven decades.

Among those under investigation are Carlos Hank Gonzalez and Jorge Hank Rhon — Mexico's rich and politically powerful father-son dynamo, often considered the power behind the 1988-94 Salinas presidency, the sources said.

DEA investigators also are looking into allegations that two powers in the Salinas administration — Salinas's chief of staff, Jose Cordoba Montoya, and private secretary, Justo Ceja Martinez, his closest confidants — attended a key meeting that included Raul Salinas, Mexico's secretary of the navy and drug kingpin Garcia Abrego. Sources said the DEA has been told that the men discussed various schemes to use Mexican state enterprises to launder drug profits and ship drugs to the United States.

EARLIER this year, Garcia Abrego stood trial in Houston and was sentenced to 11 life sentences and fined more than $500 million on drug charges.

The sources said the DEA is attempting to confirm details of the alleged meeting. Carlos Salinas, who is living in exile in Ireland, is not under investigation, they said, and has not been charged with any wrongdoing. "You have to look at it from what you can prove, and I don't see a case" against Carlos Salinas, a U.S. official said.

Stanley Arkin, one of Raul Salinas's New York attorneys, described allegations that his client used his government agency for trafficking drugs and money laundering as "self-interested, lying baloney." Arkin said that Raul Salinas is being accused because he "was the brother of the president — what better candidate for this baloney?"

Raul Salinas is currently in a maximum-security jail outside of Mexico City, charged with masterminding the assassination of Jose Francisco Ruiz Massieu, formerly the number two official in the PRI and an ex-brother-in-law of the Salinases. Mexican officials also have charged him with illegal enrichment because they cannot explain how he amassed more than $120 million in various bank accounts around the world when he made $192,000 a year at Conasupo.

Most of that money was discovered under aliases in secret Swiss banks accounts and is the subject of an intense investigation by Switzerland's attorney general, who has expressed confidence that much of the money comes from narcotics trafficking. Swiss investigators said the $120 million could represent only a fraction of the money actually deposited by Raul Salinas.

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Throwing Good Money After Bad in Iraq

OPINION
Jim Hoagland

THE CENTRAL Intelligence Agency has spent six years and $110 million trying to overthrow Saddam Hussein in the most expensive sustained failure in agency history. Iraq is the Bay of Pigs in unending free fall, with fresh humiliation looming.

The agency could not stop throwing money at the Saddam problem if it wanted to. Refusing to admit defeat, the White House orders this international embarrassment prolonged to avoid being accused on doing nothing about Iraq. This year covert operations against Iraq will cost about $5 million, the price tag for ineffective propaganda broadcasts by clandestine radio stations in Jordan and Kuwait.

Senators who normally line up to rail at executive agencies for wasting taxpayer money have kept quiet on the CIA debacle. The Senate Intelligence Committee passed up a golden opportunity to educate itself and the American public when it failed to probe CIA Director-designate George J. Tenet on this topic in Tenet's public confirmation hearing last week.

It will be up to Tenet, when he is confirmed, to decide what to do about this continuing failure, in which he played a significant role as a member of President Clinton's National Security Council staff and then as deputy director of the CIA.

The story Tenet could assemble would rival any spy novel. Interviews in Washington and Europe with CIA personnel, Iraqi dissidents and foreign intelligence sources provide new insights into this colossal exercise in self-deception and factionalism within the agency.

Some Americans who worked in Iraq covertly now wonder whether the agency was a victim of an elaborate sting perpetrated by Saddam, who watched with a benign eye as the CIA funneled money and Iraqi military defectors into a Jordan-based exile group for two years before effortlessly rolling up that organization and exposing its American roots last summer.

"The guys in Amman were promising us a zipless coup, telling us they had the silver bullet that would change Iraq," said one American who worked on the Iraq covert program. "They were put out of business in an afternoon."

Despite that failure, the agency is set to provide $4.8 million in covert funds to that group, the Iraqi National Accord (INA), again this year, according to my sources. That could change. Jordan's King Hussein is considering shutting down the agency-financed INA-run radio. Without the Amman studio, the Kuwait station would also be untenable.

The CIA pressured Jordan to provide facilities and political support for the INA's amateurish coup plotting and then left King Hussein to suffer the political consequences.

The king's shutting down the station would be a grievous setback for the anti-Saddam effort that was conceived and pursued in halfhearted fashion after George Bush declined to use military might to remove Saddam in 1991. Bush put up $40 million as a down payment on Saddam's removal when he secretly ordered the agency to create the conditions for Saddam's downfall in 1991.

Within the agency, the Iraq operation was instantly seen by some — including Frank Anderson, former head of the Middle East department — as a can of worms. These officers knew they would never get enough money or political support from the White House to engage in an all-out war against Saddam.

That feeling was reinforced when annual funding was cut to $20 million in late 1992, and then to $15 million in 1994, after Bill Clinton came to the White House and adopted Bush's program in a memorandum of notification to Congress. Ambitious junior officers targeted the money on flashy projects that led nowhere but allowed the White House to pretend something was happening.

In Iraq, the agency has been used as "the last resort of failed policy," words used by Tenet last week to describe something that should never happen to the CIA. He did not mention Iraq, but agency veterans knew what he meant. It is still unclear how deep and how self-critical Tenet's assessment of the Iraq failure runs.

Senate confirmation will give Tenet a rare chance to clean up a mess he helped make. If he does not take it and quickly shape a covert program capable of producing change in Iraq, Congress should step in swiftly with its own investigation of a national humiliation.

● At least 26 Iraqi refugees who were part of last year's failed CIA-backed effort to oust Saddam are being held in U.S. jails while authorities weigh reports that they could be spies or terrorists, sources in the anti-Saddam movement said last week.

Nabeel Musawi, political liaison for the anti-Saddam Iraqi National Congress in England called the detention of the Iraqis, some of whom worked with the CIA, "a shock and a surprise," and said that U.S. authorities had cleared them for evacuation last year after Saddam's forces rolled into opposition bastions in northern Iraq, quashing a CIA-supported attempt to oust him from power.

Transatlantic Fight Looms Over Foreign Bribery Ban

Paul Blustein

TO HEAR French and German diplomats tell it, their governments detest commercial bribery by multinational corporations, and they are just as eager to take action against such corrupt behavior as anyone else.

But their arguments ring hollow to their U.S. counterparts, who accuse France and Germany of blocking an important initiative for the world's richest countries to outlaw the bribing of foreign government officials.

The transatlantic spat is coming to a head this month in meetings at the Organization for Economic Cooperation and Development, a group of industrialized nations based in Paris.

The United States, one of the few nations that prohibits its companies from bribing foreign officials to win business overseas, wants the 29 OECD member countries to formally pledge that they will pass similar bans by the end of next year.

France and Germany are leading a small group of OECD member countries that object to the idea on the grounds that what is needed is an international treaty against corruption. The Franco-German insistence on a treaty is drawing unusually sharp criticism from Washington and some anti-corruption activists, who suspect Paris and Bonn may be trying to delay action. Both nations, critics note, allow their companies to deduct foreign bribes on their tax returns.

Promises by countries such as France and Germany to ratify an anti-bribery treaty are "a cop-out," because "you might as well wait forever" to draft and implement such a treaty, said Frank Vogl, vice chairman of Transparency International, an organization that monitors corruption and promotes anti-bribery measures. "We think there's a great danger of countries getting a PR coup by saying, 'We're against corruption,' but not following through with legislation or administration actions that turn these communiques into something real," Vogl said.

The U.S. Foreign Corrupt Practices Act, passed in 1977 after a series of bribery scandals involving American multinationals, was derided for years as naive and moralistic by many foreign officials and business executives, particularly continental Europeans.

The Clinton administration argues that U.S. firms lose tens of billions of dollars a year worth of business in fast-growing emerging markets because their foreign rivals can pay bribes to win contracts without running afoul of the law in their home countries.

Accordingly, the administration launched efforts at the OECD to promote the spread of anti-bribery legislation. Officials in many foreign governments are moving closer to the American view, partly because of popular outrage over corruption scandals abroad and partly because of mounting evidence that corruption undermines economic development in poor countries.

The administration's efforts started to bear fruit last year. An OECD meeting endorsed a resolution — watered down, according to U.S. officials, at the insistence of the French and Germans — agreeing in principle to criminalize foreign bribery and calling for member countries that allow the tax-deductibility of bribes to "review" their tax laws "with the intention of" eliminating the deduction.

But while Norway eliminated the tax deduction, and several other countries are moving in that direction, France and Germany did not, on the grounds that foreign bribes must be made illegal before the tax deduction can be removed.

And now a clash is looming over a much more strongly worded resolution to be considered at a meeting of sub-cabinet-level officials this week, which precedes the OECD's annual ministerial meeting on May 26.

U.S. officials say they have backing from "most" member countries for a resolution committing governments to outlaw foreign bribery by the end of 1998 and to establish an international monitoring mechanism to ensure that the laws are being implemented and enforced.



Italian special forces arrest one of the self-proclaimed separatists PHOTOGRAPH: FRANCO PROIETTI

Venetian Separatists Storm St. Mark's

Vera Haller in Venice

NEARLY 200 years to the day after the fall of the Republic of Venice, a band of modern-day separatists rolled into St. Mark's Square in a makeshift armored personnel carrier on Friday last week and occupied its famous bell tower to press demands for an independent Venice.

The overnight siege was brought to a peaceful end when a team of special forces commandos from Italy's Carabinieri paramilitary police stormed the bell tower after daybreak and the separatists surrendered without resistance. Six men were arrested in the bell tower and another two were taken into custody in their armored vehicle, which was parked in the square. Police said they also recovered a submachine gun from the bell tower.

The men had hung a banner from the 325-foot tower, one of Venice's most famous landmarks, with the words, "Serenissima Repubblica," as the old Venetian republic had been called. The anniversary of the fall of the republic, which was one of Europe's greatest economic powers, fell on May 12, 200 years after the last doge was deposed. Police said the men who staged the protest claim to be members of a small separatist movement, the Venetian Serenissima Army, whose stated aim is to restore Venice's independence.

The separatists' operation began just after midnight on the lagoon island of Tronchetto, which is connected to mainland Italy by bridge, where they commandeered a public ferryboat, loaded on their armored vehicle and a white camper, and ordered the captain to take them to St. Mark's Square.

Upon entering the square in the two vehicles, six of the separatists scaled the wooden fence surrounding the bell tower, which is under restoration and closed to the public. Police responded soon afterward and tried all night to negotiate a surrender. Seven hours into the siege, 24 black-clad commandos stormed the tower and took the separatists into custody. Police told a news conference later that they had found food, water, wine and sleeping bags in the bell tower, indicating the separatists had prepared for a long siege.

The separatists, who ranged in age from 20 to 45 and were dressed in camouflage, were charged with kidnapping for commandeering the ferry, belonging to an armed gang, subversion and lesser charges relating to disturbing public order.

Separatist sentiment runs strong in northern Italy where many people are resentful of high taxes and perceived excesses of the central government in Rome. But Umberto Bossi, leader of the most mainstream of the separatist movements, the Northern League, said his followers were not involved in the Venice incident. "We had nothing to do with it," Bossi said.

Venice's Serenissima movement has been blamed by police for several incidents in recent months in which airwaves have been pirated during local television news programs and used to broadcast messages related to the separatists' cause.

GUARDIAN WEEKLY
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Germans Begin to Bridge Ethnic Divide

William Drozdiak in Berlin

WHEN Cem Ozdemir entered the German Bundestag in 1994, the event was hailed as more than a personal triumph. The 30-year-old Green Party member, who was born in a Black Forest village but did not acquire a German passport until he was 18, became the first Turkish German to be elected to parliament.

Unlike his family and friends, Ozdemir saw nothing special in breaking one of the country's most enduring political barriers. "I just thought it was time to stand up and declare that millions like me should play a role in this democracy," he said in an interview. "One out of every five babies are born to foreigners, so it should be obvious a future Germany will be represented by people from different ethnic backgrounds."

To a degree that alarms some politicians, the human face of Germany is changing rapidly. Indeed, Ozdemir's election is just one of many signs that the homogeneous, blue-eyed-blond image once nurtured by this nation of 80 million inhabitants is being supplanted by something more diverse.

The wave of guest workers who began migrating from Italy, Greece and Turkey nearly four decades ago to help resurrect Germany's economy from the ashes of World War II has been augmented since the fall of the Berlin Wall by a massive influx of Poles, Iranians, Yugoslavs and Russians. In the past decade, the number of foreigners — meaning everyone of non-German ancestry regardless of country of birth — living in Germany has nearly doubled to 7.2 million, or 9 percent of the population.

Chancellor Helmut Kohl insists that Germany must not become an immigrant nation like the United States. The Bonn government has taken measures to close a porous frontier that borders eight countries. It has curtailed one of the world's most liberal asylum policies, discouraged the resettlement of ethnic Germans from eastern countries and started the forcible expulsion of as many as 80,000 Bosnian refugees.

Meanwhile, many Germans have come to believe there is an urgent need to defuse mounting tensions and the dangers of a two-tier society by integrating foreigners who have settled here — especially the many Turks, who began arriving in large numbers in the 1960s to help ease labor shortages. They now number about 2 million.

"Whether or not we like to admit it, Germany already has become a society of varied races and cultures," said Cornelia Schmalz-Jacobsen, the commissioner for foreigners. "We are now into the third generation of families who came here in the 1950s. It's ridiculous to talk about them as guest workers or foreign fellow citizens. These people are German, and they have to be recognized as such."

A clear political majority that cuts across party lines is now coalescing around the need to abandon Germany's status as the only major Western nation that bases nationality on blood lines. Laws may soon be passed that will ease the naturalization process and grant dual citizenship to children born here of immigrant parents.

Nearly everybody agrees that the current citizenship law, rooted in a 1913 imperial decree that based nationality on German ancestry, seems badly outdated. Under the principle of inherited nationality, millions of ethnic Germans who do not speak German and whose ancestors lived for generations in the Volga region of the former Soviet Union have arrived in recent years to a strange and bewildering land where they are entitled to citizenship automatically.

But Turkish Germans who were born here, speak fluent German, work for German companies and pay German taxes still face enormous bureaucratic obstacles in gaining citizenship. Until 1993, foreigners were obliged to wait 15 years and spend thousands of dollars in fees to apply for German citizenship, and even then there were no guarantees. Now an applicant must have only eight years' residency, reasonable fluency in German and prove he can support a family without state assistance. But the bureaucratic obstacles to citizenship remain daunting.



Turkish Germans who speak fluent German and pay taxes still face enormous obstacles in gaining citizenship PHOTOGRAPH: GARY CALTON

"There's still a lot of anger and alienation that is rooted in feelings of injustice over the nationality issue," said Ceyhun Kara, 31, a sociologist and civil rights counselor for Berlin's Turkish community. What Turks here are most furious about is when they have worked or lived here for 20 or 30 years, and then they get sick or unemployed, and suddenly they find they can't become German citizens." They then lack the citizen's right to full unemployment and health benefits.

Germany's long-standing refusal to integrate foreigners, many Turks argue, has contributed to the tense climate of racial antagonism in post-unification Germany. More than 30 foreigners, many of them Turks, have been killed in arson attacks since 1990. Eighteen attacks have occurred this year, causing four deaths and seven injuries.

The racial violence has aggravated serious strains in Germany's relations with Turkey, which claims Bonn is not doing enough to protect Turks here.

"Since they could not throw us out, the Germans are trying to burn us out," Turkish Interior Minister Meral Aksener said in March. Her remarks outraged the Bonn government, which noted police findings that some arson attacks were carried out by feuding foreigners, not by racist Germans.

"The situation is becoming very alarming," said Ozdemir, the member of parliament. "Many of the young Turkish Germans who were born here feel completely rejected by this society. So they are turning toward religious fanaticism or nationalistic movements that one day could tear this country apart."

Young members of Kohl's Christian Democratic party share Ozdemir's sense of urgency about giving young foreigners a larger stake in German society. They believe the time has come for a dramatic break with the blood inheritance principle.

"It has to be in our interests not to leave these young people out in the cold, but to lead them to take on responsibilities toward Germany. If they are born here, go to school here, train for a job here, they should automatically be German," said Christian Democratic legislator Horst Eylmann.

But the reformists face fierce opposition from Teutonic purists in their own ruling party and in the Bavarian Christian Social Union. Opponents contend that at a time when a record high 4.7 million Germans are out of work, it would be foolish politically and economically to offer the benefits of German citizenship to millions of foreigners.

"We believe it is completely unacceptable that millions of our citizens are unemployed while more than a million work permits are issued to foreigners each year," said Michael Glos, the Bavarian party's parliamentary chief.

But the work permits are for the manual labor jobs that Germans are reluctant to take or consider to be beneath them.

INTERIOR Minister Manfred Kanther, one of the most powerful members of Kohl's cabinet, has endorsed views such as Glos's. He has strongly disputed the notion that citizenship would alleviate the profound sense of alienation felt by many foreigners living in Germany. "What difference does a passport make to the fact that a child of immigrants may feel foreign . . . because he has a different religion, skin of a different color, speaks poor German or is treated badly . . . ?" Kanther asked.

Until now, Kohl generally has sided with the conservative argument, emphasizing the need to preserve Germany's Teutonic identity from the influences of immigrants.

But Ozdemir and his allies are hopeful that the chancellor's position ultimately will be swayed by a private, family affair: Kohl's son, Peter, 32, has just become engaged to Elif Sozen, the daughter of a prominent Istanbul businessman.

Brazil Anguishes Over Police Abuse

Gabriel Escobar in Sao Paulo

BACK WHEN Brazil was a colony, Portuguese authorities "cleansed" neighborhoods by rounding up suspects and shipping them off to Africa without trial. As late as the 1930s, undesirables were extradited to the inhospitable Amazon and not heard from again.

Even today, Brazilian governors have their military police. In the face of crime over the last few years — a prison riot, a land occupation, drug dealing — these armies have been told to restore order, and the result has been dead troublemakers.

This history is an important backdrop to what emerged when a hidden camera slowly panned the intersection of two grimy and now infamous streets in a very poor pocket of this megalopolis. The police officers captured on videotape ostensibly were doing their duty — going after troublemakers. However, in this home video — shot surreptitiously over three consecutive nights in March — it becomes horribly clear that these peacekeeping officers were waging a systematic war on civilians.

The powerful 90-minute videotape, parts of which were aired on national television last month, is seen by some Brazilians as an indictment of a society that tends to believe criminals should be subjected to rough justice, preferably on the spot.

What has proven most frightening to many Brazilians is that the targets of this particular abuse were not miscreants. They were law-abiding citizens who unwittingly entered a world where people are presumed guilty, beaten and even shot dead for no apparent reason.

"The moment this was shown on television, this crude deed, it changed people," said Luiz Antonio Guimareas Marrey, the attorney general for the state of Sao Paulo, which has been wrestling with the many consequences of the video. "It was no longer a piece of paper, an article in a newspaper. There were real victims. It showed that if it can happen to them, it can happen to anybody."

The videotape in effect put every Brazilian at the intersection of Naval and Jose Francisco Braz, two streets that cut through a small shantytown in the southern part of greater Sao Paulo. The 15 people whom the police abused are a cross-section of Brazilians, white and black and of mixed race, poor and middle class, anonymous citizens who were stopped simply because they used Naval Street as a shortcut. The videotape dispassionately captured what career prosecutor Antonio Carlos da Ponte called "the 'banalization' of violence" in Brazil.

One of the first to be abused was Silvio Calixto Lemos, who was slapped and then ominously led out of camera view, where the serious beatings took place. The officer in charge, Octavio Lorenco Gambra, walked over and gave his partner, Nelson Soares da Silva Junior, a police nightstick. The viewer catches a glimpse of Soares conducting the beating but for about 80 seconds all that is heard are Lemos's cries. In an indictment of the 10 officers involved, investigators said Gambra fired two shots at Lemos but missed, allowing him to escape on foot.

At midnight three days later, three people were ordered out of a car — Antonio Carlos Dias, Jefferson Sanches Caput and Mario Jose Josino. Sanches, an accountant, raised the ire of the officers by asking why he was stopped. He was struck by Gambra and by Soares. The two officers hit Sanches 39 times in eight minutes.

Eventually the three were allowed to get back into the car. Sanches later said he asked the officers for the number of their squad car. In the tape, Gambra pointed at the car's rear window as it was pulling away and shot twice, striking Josino in the back and killing him.

The shooting was reported that night, but no police investigation was opened. However, by the end of March, the tape had been made available to prosecutors and eventually to Rede Globo, the television network.

This recognition has led to some deep soul-searching, particularly in Sao Paulo, the country's richest urban center and in many ways the financial capital of South America. The awareness of such injustice in Brazil has made long-delayed reforms in the judicial system and in the police force a priority, for the first time raising hopes of substantive changes among human rights leaders.

"There are parts of society who defend, sometimes implicitly, police who exterminate bandits, criminals, suspects," Marrey said. "It is not as if the police force is made up of extraterrestrials, completely divorced from a society that is civilized and respects human rights."

News that the police here are not only inefficient but occasionally murderous is not new. In the wake of the video's release, Human Rights Watch Americas rushed out a report it had been preparing for months on police violence in Brazil, in which the organization concludes that officers in major urban areas "often kill without justification" and that society's failure to curb this tendency in effect encourages cops to be abusive.

But the tape has accomplished what no scholarly study or human rights complaint has been able to do. What had been simply a collection of statistics suddenly became wounded flesh and fresh blood.

Finding the Soul Behind the Mask

Akira Iriye

SHADOW SHOGUNS:
The Rise and Fall of Japan's Postwar Political Machine
By Jacob M. Schlesinger
Simon & Schuster. 366pp. $26

JAPAN
A Reinterpretation
By Patrick Smith
Pantheon. 385pp. $27.50

THERE WAS A TIME, not long ago, when writings on Japan contained superlatives: about its disciplined work force, group loyalty, technological ingenuity — or about its sinister designs to dominate global markets and to plunder other nations' cultural treasures. Japan appeared like a new breed of inscrutable monster that made even the Soviet Union seem a tamer rival, with a power largely confined to the military.

If the new, excellent books by Jacob Schlesinger and Patrick Smith, both American journalists of long residence in Japan, are any indication, those days of exaggerated images of the country, whether in adulation or in fear, may be about over. Instead, we may be beginning to have accounts of Japan that are truer to size and, therefore, more illuminating about its position in the world today.

To be sure, the Japan that is depicted by the two authors is not pretty. Schlesinger focuses on postwar Japan's political machine and explains how it managed to keep itself in power, enriching its members and, by association, their constituents. The key to the story, which is told vividly in this well researched and reliable account, was the political exploitation of public works.

As the nation sought to recover from the war, the leaders developed grandiose schemes for the construction of highways, railways, tunnels, dams, sewage systems. Contractors were pre-selected, and they in turn made generous campaign contributions to politicians and gifts to bureaucrats.

The result was a corrupt system: politicians amassing huge fortunes through their brokering of various projects, and bureaucrats often entering politics on the basis of their contacts with politicians and contractors.

According to Schlesinger, it was Tanaka Kakuei, "Japan's first true, successful populist," who perfected this system of government-business collusion. He actively promoted construction projects as an LDP (Liberal Democratic Party) politician for years before becoming prime minister in 1972. Even more important, Schlesinger notes, after he resigned from office in the aftermath of a scandal involving the Lockheed company, he retained his power over the politicians and bureaucrats due to his intimate knowledge of their associations, but, more importantly, because the voters recognized him as a man who was bringing home so many benefits.

Tanaka came to be called a "shadow Shogun," the man who wielded the real power behind a string of prime ministers. The Tanaka system continued under his followers, who were able to push his politics of corruption even further during the economically giddy days of the 1980s.

Schlesinger observes that these corrupt politicians and their constituents were able to get away with it because the nation's security was assured by a U.S. alliance, and, after what it had done to the world in the 1930s and the 1940s, few nations wanted it to play any role in international affairs.

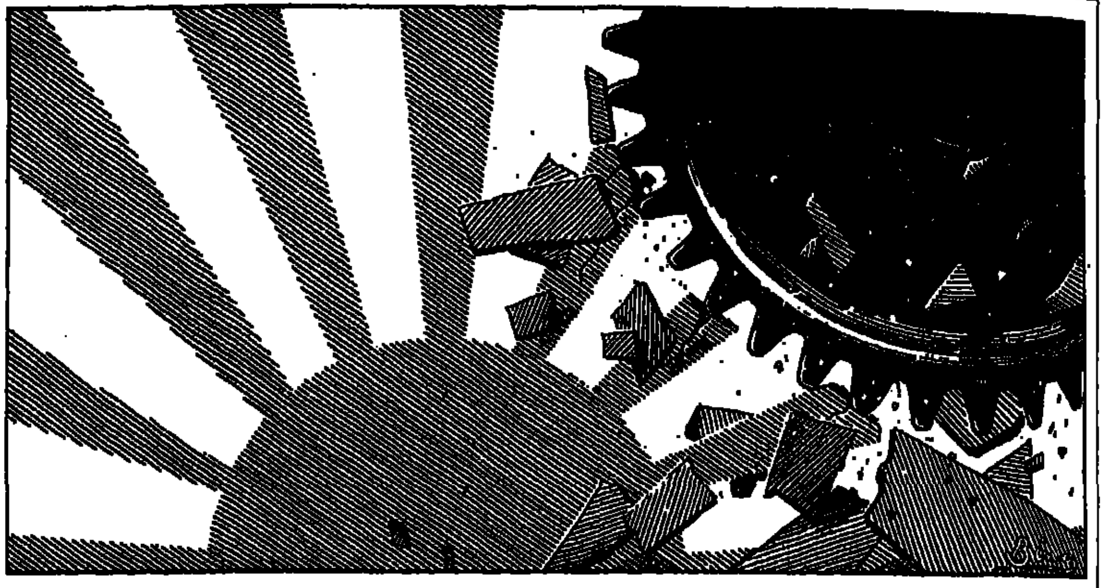


ILLUSTRATION: CHRISTOPHER BING

Schlesinger's superb analysis of Japan's politics and economic affairs is matched by Smith's equally penetrating examination of its culture and society. The books parallel each other in many important ways in describing a less than formidable Japan, but Smith's is more argumentative, combining brilliant observations with questionable generalizations.

Distinguishing what he considers the real Japan from the one that has been imagined by Japanese and foreigners alike, Smith notes that "authentically Japanese" culture and society have been hidden from view for centuries. The "visible" Japan is "a world without feeling: rational, scientific, calculating, capitalist, masculine." In it everyone wears a mask, and the masks are all the same. But there is another, more authentic Japan in which people seek "the communal, the nurturing, the intuitive, the sentimental, and the feminine." This real Japan is represented by the provinces on the Japan Sea — such as Tanaka's home town — and by people who have been marginalized, obscured and discriminated against, including women, radical students and even the ultra-right nationalists.

The search for authenticity — behind the veneer of accumulated images — has been an ongoing process, according to Smith. He believes that there was a brief moment, circa 1945-1947, when, under the guidance and encouragement of U.S. occupation authorities, the Japanese sought to assert their autonomy and individuality, but, with the onset of the Cold War, such endeavors were suppressed and gave way to the faceless, inhuman bureaucratic system in which collective economic successes mattered far more than personal rights. The nation's political brokers "put Japan to sleep as a civic society."

Smith harshly criticizes Japanese and foreign commentators who, he alleges, have obstructed this dismal picture by harping on such themes as Japan's modernization, partnership with the United States, membership in the elite group of advanced democratic nations, etc. In reality, Smith argues, Japan is neither advanced nor democratic, and it will continue thus until the people discard their masks and learn to express themselves.

Highly critical, these two books nevertheless suggest there is still hope, if only because the situation up to now could not have been worse. Today, the LDP is back in power, but the days of unlimited economic growth and non-participation in international affairs appear to be over. The Japanese are being forced to consider their options domestically and externally. If the search is successful, according to Smith, Japan will become "stronger, more assertive, more of its own mind."

Whether that is a welcome prospect for the United States or for China and other Asian neighbors, however, is by no means clear. Do they really want a Japan that is soul-searching and internationalist and devotes more resources to external affairs? The solution may lie in more, rather than less, external influence upon Japanese life. In their search for identity, the Japanese may find that no nation today is completely autonomous.

A Poet in the Diplomatic Bag

John Kenneth Galbraith

IN LIGHT OF INDIA
By Octavio Paz.
Translated from the Spanish
by Eliot Weinberger
Harcourt, Brace. 209pp. $22

SOME 30-odd years ago, while serving as ambassador in India, I discovered that if I did no work my staff could do as well or better, I could finish everything in not over three hours a day, the occasional crisis excepted. So with a reasonably good conscience I spent the time writing instead. Two or three books emerged, one of them, while I was still in office, under a pseudonym. I did not think it practical to clear it with Secretary of State Dean Rusk.

In recognition of this situation in the diplomatic world, Mexico is far ahead of the United States. It has traditionally sent its best writers and scholars abroad to take advantage of this happily available leisure. Carlos Fuentes spent many months at the Mexican embassy in Paris, where he became a dominant figure in the French literary community. And Octavio Paz did two tours in India (after also serving in Paris), where for six years he was Mexican ambassador. The relations between Mexico and India being what they are, or more precisely what they are not, he had plenty of time for reading, travel, reflection on the life and history of the latter country. It was right to give this opportunity to a poet. One result, many years later, is this delightful book.

It begins as autobiography: his first arrival in India, the first immersion in the incredible urban life of Bombay, a tedious train trip on to New Delhi. Then he turns to Indian history, in particular the enduring conflict between religions. He also explores the origins and character of the caste system, quite the best account of that incredible and enduring institution that I, at least, have ever read. Then he goes on to the British for whom, like many Indians now, he has a strongly favorable word. It was British rule that gave India a national identity rising above religion and language. Its tragedy came at the very end in the slicing up of the subcontinent. The Raj accepted failure in what, in the reconciliation of deeply contentious factions, had been its greatest success.

There are then short admiring comments on Gandhi and on Jawaharlal Nehru, who made permanent what the British had made possible.

Paz mentions but does not, in my view, sufficiently stress the pressure of modern industrialism on Indian thought and life. That the ultimate test of Indian achievement lies in economic development is simply accepted as an article of faith. This is not universal; in India nothing ever is. Nehru once told me that the only two modern inventions he thought indispensable were the bicycle and the electric light. But he said this while deep in concern for the economic success of the five-year plans.

In the latter pages of this book — really, an extended essay — Octavio Paz explores the world of Indian poetry, an exercise which I found fascinating and to which, alas, I bring no critical judgment.

Then he tells of his difference with the Mexican government, which had crushed with cruel and sanguinary violence a student revolt. He could not be part of a government that so behaved; he had a quiet dinner with Indira and Rajiv Gandhi and made his way back to Mexico.

Let there be no doubt. To have poets staffing the diplomatic corps is a wonderful idea. This book is surely the proof.

Slave to Caribbean History

Kwame Dawes

SALT
By Earl Lovelace
Persea. 260pp. $23.95

IT HAS been over 10 years since Earl Lovelace published his last novel, The Wine Of Astonishment, so that the publication of Salt is surely a welcome occasion. Some will regard it as Lovelace's passport into the echelons of World Literature — it is his most assured work to date, and it allows him to display his remarkable capacity as a poetic and innovative fiction writer. It represents Lovelace's take on Caribbean colonial and post-colonial history and is, no doubt, a novel that he needed to write.

In it he charts the twisted and convoluted history of Trinidadian society in a language that dances with sheer audacity. And yet there is something peculiarly familiar about it. Salt, one could argue, has been written before by other writers; and while it may be one of the better incarnations of the "making of the West Indies," it remains a work that echoes Lawrence Scott, Denis Scott, Victor Reid, Edgar Mittleholtzer, George Lamming and Earl Long.

Surely, though, the inclination to cover material that has been dealt with by others does not automatically make it a failure. What leaves me uneasy about this novel is that I am not sure what new insights he brings to the topic.

Salt follows the life of Alford George, a schoolteacher who finds himself stranded in the Caribbean. He remains in Trinidad and goes on to a career as a politician. His struggles are placed in the context of the history of his slave ancestors, whose past is characterized by magic, mystery and the sheer energy to survive.

Lovelace tells this story in a language that shifts deftly from dialect to standard English. The poetry that results is seductive, evocative and at times quite brilliant.

But Lovelace has spoiled me. I have come to expect from him a certain currency of vision, a daring stylistic instinct and a willingness to enact the current realities of his society. These are the qualities that lifted The Wine Of Astonishment into an urban narrative of tragic proportion. Salt does not have that immediacy; it lacks urgency, and appears to find solace in neocolonial rhetoric.

For those not familiar with the range of this West Indian writer, Salt is a solid introduction to his work. But I can't help hoping that Lovelace will not take so long to write his next novel and that it will tackle the new West Indies with characteristic daring and innovation.

A question of degrees

Teaching English as a foreign language has become a very competitive career option, so securing the right qualifications is essential, writes **Jonas Hughes**

BECOMING an English language teacher can be an attractive prospect. It gives one the opportunity to live and work abroad, to experience different cultures, to learn different languages, and to increase one's employment prospects. But first you need to get qualified.

The first step is to gain at least the minimum qualification. Not only are you unlikely to want to work for schools which accept unqualified "teachers", but being able to show evidence of your skills puts you in a much better bargaining position when looking for jobs.

The standard initial teaching qualification — commonly known as the certificate — is a practical award which is obtained after just four weeks' full-time training. Do not be fooled by the apparent lack of effort this implies; most trainee teachers claim it is the most exhausting experience they have ever had, both intellectually and physically.

Certificate courses are not cheap — normally between £800 and £1,000 — so be sure to take one of the two which are recognised worldwide. These are the CELTA (Certificate in English Language Teaching to Adults), offered by Cambridge Examinations; and CTESOL (Certificate in Teaching English to Speakers of Other Languages), offered by Trinity College, London.

To enrol, you must be at least 20 years old and educated to A level standard or equivalent. If your first language is not English, you need a written and spoken level of English equivalent to that of an educated native speaker. On most courses, there is a minimum of 100 hours' tuition and six hours' teaching practice.

These courses give candidates a grounding in theory and methodology, combined with classroom techniques. They are available either full-time or part-time (up to the length of an academic year). Assessment is continuous and focuses mainly on practical teaching ability and language awareness.

Once teachers have gained a certificate and have some teaching experience, various options for further education are open to them. In the main there are two: the diploma, a higher practical award for teachers who intend to remain in the classroom; and the Master's degree, which is aimed either at teachers who want to concentrate on the theory of language and teaching, or those who want to move into school management and administration.

Teachers interested in the diploma will typically want to gain further training in practical teaching skills. Several diplomas are available, but again it is advisable to take one offered by Cambridge Examinations (DTEFLA — Diploma in the Teaching of English as a Foreign Language to Adults) or Trinity College, London (Licentiate Diploma in TESOL). These courses can be taken full- or part-time, and in some cases as distance learning programmes (*see below*).

The obvious advantage of part-time or distance learning courses is that they allow teachers to continue working while doing the course. The disadvantage is that you need to be highly motivated and disciplined to work and study at the same time.

If you have eight weeks to spare, the full-time option is probably a better bet. Be warned, however, that the course is very intensive and will include both teaching practice and a substantial amount of written work (about 10 assignments).

For non-native teachers, Cambridge administers the DOTE (Diploma for Overseas Teachers of English). This course is not offered by institutions in the UK, and will soon be discontinued as both it and the DTEFLA are being replaced by a new diploma called the DELTA (Diploma in English Language Teaching to Adults). This will, once and for all, abolish the distinction between native and non-native speakers, which is becoming increasingly difficult to justify.

For teachers who would prefer to move out of the classroom and concentrate on the academic side of language teaching, a Master's degree in TEFL or Applied Linguistics may be the answer. In fact, if you are thinking of making a career out of TEFL, you would be well-advised to do a Master's. They don't come cheap, though, and will cost European nationals around £2,500. Non-European Union citizens will have to fork out between £5,000 and £6,000.

Before you start sending off for university prospectuses, you should know that British universities do not accept Master's candidates unless they have a certificate and a minimum of two years' teaching experience. This requirement reflects the fact that Master's courses contain little or no teaching practice.

Full-time courses take an academic year, or longer, but an increasing popular option is the modular course. These allow candidates to spread the course (and the cost) over a period of three or four years, and although some modules are compulsory teachers can usually choose them according to their area of interest.

In summary, the Master's serves as a bridge between your experience in the classroom and the theory of language and teaching. For the teacher with ideas, it is an invaluable tool-box which enables you to develop your own techniques.

Finally, teachers with managerial inclinations may want to consider a career as a Director of Studies. In this capacity, you would be responsible for school management, administration, and possibly some teacher training. For this post, you will need at least a diploma and probably a Master's degree.

Guardian readers can get a free copy of the BBC English Guide to Teachers' Qualifications. Write to: BBC English Magazine, Bush House, London WC2B 4PH, UK, fax: +44 (0)171 257 8316; e-mail: bbc.english.magazine@bbc.co.uk

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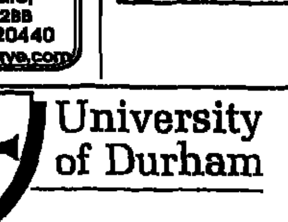
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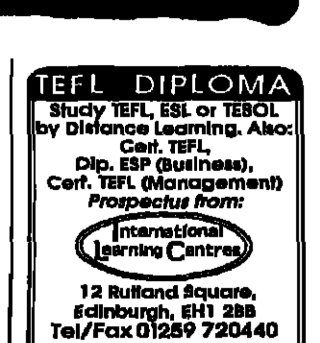


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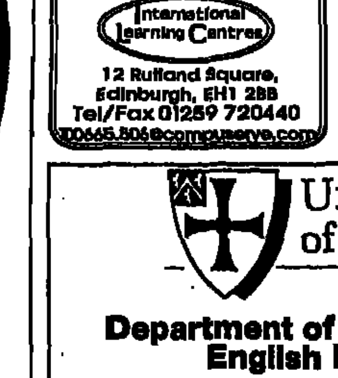
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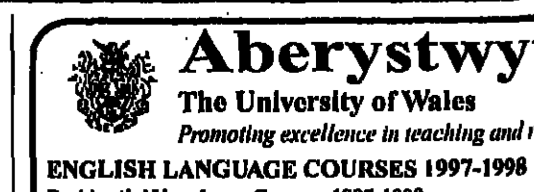
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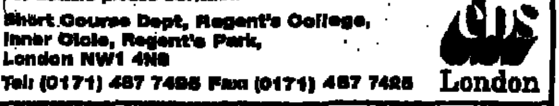
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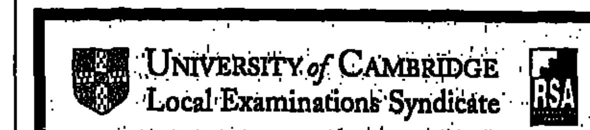
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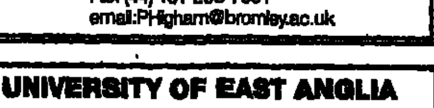
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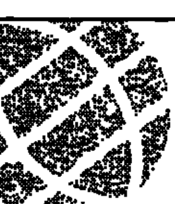
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The nerve of the man

Sir John Eccles

SIR John Eccles, who has died aged 94, was the greatest Australian physiologist of his generation, a Nobel Laureate and — almost against his judgment and conscience — a lifelong Europhile and Anglophile.

His influence in science and on Australian academic structures was crucial during the 1950s: through contributions to understanding of the biochemistry of the creation of nerve signals; and through the founding of the Australian Academy of Science (modelled on the Royal Society) and his vigorous aspirations for international stature in the sciences at the Australian National University.

Sir John, bespectacled and firm-jawed, was a tough, determined realist, a brilliant if obstinate scientist and a shrewd politician. He startled — some would say embarrassed — the notables at the Nobel Prize dinner in Stockholm in 1963 by surveying the elderly (and enfeebled) winning scientists of other disciplines and booming, as only he could, that "we physiologists are obviously the healthiest of the lot".

He was probably right, although in his research he had been often obstinately wrong throughout the 1930s. This was a crucial era for the investigation of the mechanisms by which neural signals are translated into action by muscles and how signals travel along nerve fibres and across the small gaps at nerve junctions. Techniques developed for these studies later prepared the way for ECG measurements and interpretation.

The academic context is important. Sir John was a top graduate from Melbourne University in medicine in 1925 and, as a Rhodes scholar, came to Magdalen College, Oxford, where he gathered prizes while studying under Sir Charles Sherrington, who defended the established view that nerve impulses were primarily electrical.

Eccles focused on the processes by which impulses are triggered or inhibited and became a vocal traditionalist, siding with Sherrington and arguing the electrical nature of impulses throughout the early and mid 1930s. During this time, Sir Henry Dale and others in Britain developed the eventually triumphant theory of chemical transmission across nerve junctions which was able to home in on acetylcholine as the transmitter.

Dale's theory of chemical transmission and the counter-arguments of Eccles had been widely published and discussed by 1936, the year in which Gerhard Schrader of I G Farbenindustrie identified, among new potential pesticides, one of enormous lethality. This appeared to work by producing rapid death through muscle paralysis. Its potential as a weapon was drawn to the attention of the German military and, in 1937, it emerged as the first nerve gas, Tabun. Very rapid in action and far more lethal than anything before, it possessed probable war-winning capabilities against an unprepared enemy.



Sir John Eccles . . . robust and realistic scientist

German scientists were fairly sure that British scientists of the calibre of Eccles, and those in Dale's group, must know something about nerve signal blocking agents such as Tabun. But there was a total absence of papers on this new class of compounds in open scientific literature, both in Britain and the US. This gap in the literature was misinterpreted by German scientific intelligence as censorship, indicating — wrongly — that Britain was already aware of nerve gases.

So Germany's potentially devastating stockpiles of several thousand tons of nerve gas were never unleashed because Hitler mistakenly feared that Germany would suffer reprisals in kind from the Allies.

The Allies stumbled on the gas plants and stockpiles, only later studying them and realising their significance. Post-war research, largely outside Germany, made use of knowledge of nerve agent mechanisms and was able to unravel the complex biochemical framework of nerve transmission, both across the gaps at nerve junctions and along the fibres.

This happened during the cold war at chemical warfare and defence establishments such as Porton Down and Fort Detrick. While much of the practical research, now seen as wholly unacceptable, was kept very secret, basic research went ahead in universities around the world.

Eccles had returned to Australia in 1937 to head the Kanematsu Institute of Pathology in Sydney. During the war he had long debates with Karl Popper about the formal structure and testing of hypotheses. Popper had a profound influence in reshaping his research philosophy. From 1944 to the mid-1950s, heading teams at Otago in Dunedin, New Zealand and at the Australian National University, Canberra, Eccles attacked brilliantly the way nerve signals may be transmitted or inhibited, a mystery that had baffled research for two decades. Eccles unravelled the precise processes of ionic transport that selectively inhibit unwanted signals. This led to his share of the 1963 Nobel Prize for physiology and medicine with the English scientists Adrian Huxley and Alan Hodgkin.

Eccles was a man of enormous energy who wore his years lightly. After reaching the mandatory retirement age at Canberra, he went to the US, first to Chicago for two years and then headed the neurobiology research unit at the University of New York until 1975. His relaxation usually involved travelling in Europe and in his essay My Scientific Odyssey, he describes his affection for England and its scientific brilliance and stimulation in the 1920s and 1930s. "Perhaps I should have weathered the storm in England, for I found the academic isolation of Sydney severe," he wrote.

But by returning to Australia, Eccles was able to establish a scientific platform whose international standards have become ever firmer. "My years in Canberra were the most important of my life," he wrote.

Much of Sir John's early training as a child in Melbourne came from his father, William Eccles, a schoolteacher. In 1928, while at Oxford, he married a New Zealander, Irene Francis Miller, a marriage that 40 years and nine children later was dissolved; he was very much the family man, proud of his children and their achievements. In 1968, he married Helena Taborikova, with whom he settled in retirement in Switzerland, producing books dominated by studies of the mysterious differences between brain function and mind.

Sir John was an uncomfortable giant who never lost his rough edges; he created new and important science and helped bring valuable maturity to academic thought in Australia.

Anthony Tucker

Sir John Carew Eccles, physiologist; born January 27, 1903; died May 2, 1997

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HOTELS & APPARTMENTS

For nearly two decades the debate about women's rights has been stuck on the sterile ground of 'post-feminism'. But, **Sheila Rowbotham** writes, women have continued to organise and network — from the home as well as the workplace



PHOTOMONTAGE: LIZ COULDWELL

Real feminists tackle the world's real problems

THE media had hardly begun to take feminism seriously when they began to announce it was finished. An American journalist coined the phrase "post-feminism" in the early 1980s, and since then we have been assumed to be either in mourning or grateful for release. Yet because the British media take their cue so much from the United States, "girls on top" can still make it into the news, and so can the personal dilemmas of the middle class.

It is not the much-vaunted "backlash" against feminism which is the problem — after all, there has been a sustained assault on any shred of liberty and real equality which survives in society at large. It is a more subtle, unstated bias which decides what can be printed. Because readers are now assumed to start yawning at accounts of women who are not part of the élite taking collective action for radical change, media discussion has been thinned down to the recycling of opinion which too often disdains the touch of actuality.

The result is that debate about women's wants and rights has become stuck in the narrowest of grooves, which excludes the experiences of the great majority; and that the extraordinary movements emerging among poor women in many parts of the world have hardly been noticed.

In the late 1990s, there are several women's movements with diverse political aims; some have much less power than others. Women workers in the informal sector, women supporting men on strike, women protesting about prices or demanding social provision and resisting environmental devastation have either been ignored or recorded as a flash in the pan. Yet they have mobilised on a scale far beyond the women's liberation groups of the 1970s and have created their own networks nationally and internationally. While their starting point has been the basic need to survive, not a desire to be women in new ways, they have frequently found themselves doing and thinking the unimaginable. And it has been amidst adversity and in desperation that they have developed the courage and conviction to challenge that dismal deification of "flexibility" and market forces that has threatened their livelihoods.

An inspirational example has been the Self Employed Women's Association (SEWA) which, led by Ela Bhatt, began organising women in the informal sector in Ahmedabad, India, in the 1970s. By listening and learning about specific grievances, by building up confidence, by winning partial victories and, in the words of its secretary, Renana Jhabvala, "keeping on keeping on", SEWA has grown to well over 200,000 members. It recruits paper pickers, street vendors, rural workers and homeworkers, mobilising as a union, defending as a friendly society, publicising as a campaign group and creating more democratic kinds of employment as a co-operative.

The SEWA approach has wider relevance, for it indicates ways of associating which have lessons for unions in the West weakened by the growth of low-paid casual jobs. Moreover Ela Bhatt and Renana Jhabvala have an international vision. From the 1980s, they have consolidated links with trades unions, women's groups and homeworkers' organisations and argued within institutions such as the International Labour Organisation (ILO) that, instead of laws that regulate the poor from on high, policy should reflect needs voiced by homeworkers themselves.

In 1994, HomeNet, an international network for home-based workers, was formed. Its members range from embroiderers in Madeira, unionised for 20 years, to the Self-Employed Women's Union (SEWU) in South Africa, which started recruiting poor, non-unionised women in 1994. With help from South African trades unions, SEWU is already networking with other African countries, where unions, hit by structural-adjustment programmes, are turning to unorganised workers in the informal sector.

Home-based workers finally won recognition from the ILO in June 1996, despite bitter employer opposition. The resulting Convention and its recommendations were a significant marker. They demonstrated how notions of who is seen to be a worker and how work is defined have been transformed by new patterns of production. They repudiated the doctrine of profits at any price.

Women vendors organised by SEWA have a slogan: "Dignity and daily bread". This combination of aspiration and survival, of well-being and health, still lurks in the old word, *livelihood*. And a livelihood spans work and home: it is about what you can spend as well as what you earn.

THESE connections of political economy, obvious because they are lived, are not only well understood in Ahmedabad. From the 1980s, in countries such as Peru, Mexico, Brazil, Nicaragua and South Africa, there have been mass mobilisations of hundreds of thousands of women around prices, rents and basic social needs, schools, health centres and sanitation. The political theorist Sonia Alvarez describes these as "militant motherhood" movements and notes how, when women rebel because they cannot care for their families, they create a new space in the public arena of politics.

When people face an unknown situation, they often look back to get their bearings, mixing something old with something new. In the United States, there is a tradition of "women's auxiliaries" forming in support of strikes because the men's conditions and wages affect the whole family; but women in the Pittston mining dispute of 1988 opted for the more autonomous name, "Daughters of Mother Jones", in memory of a white-haired agitator who defied gun thugs in her 80s early this century.

There is a strength in having a history. The role of women in the British miners' strike of 1984-5 did receive extensive coverage. But this visibility was to be ephemeral, and the organisational continuities have been little remarked. Women Against Pit Closures subsequently helped inspire women in the printers' strike at Wapping and the seafarers' strike. Over the past 18 months, Women Of The Waterfront, formed in the Liverpool docks dispute, has been turning former housewives into public speakers. As Doreen McNally put it at an International Women's Day meeting in Manchester this year: "We've gone from the kitchen to the world platform." She had just got back from a conference of trades unionists in the newly industrialised countries of the Pacific rim.

The new self-confidence she has found is based on a democratic belief in human capacity. "It's with all of us." Like the Daughters of Mother Jones, she says she feels a debt to those who won improvements for the working class in the past, and adds: "We see ourselves as caretakers of the future." Her own family's livelihood has been smashed, leading her to connect to other people who have suffered from the social devastation caused by economic policies that favour low pay, insecurity and welfare cuts.

Women Against Pit Closures and Women Of The Waterfront have insisted that livelihood means more than money, and that we have a responsibility for future generations. It is remarkable how the same feelings of guardianship have galvanised women in very different contexts. In India, the women who hugged trees in the Chipko (literally "cling to") protests against deforestation during the mid-1970s had a similiar understanding.

During the 1980s, an environmental-justice movement developed in the United States protesting against the toxic dumping concentrated in areas where poor black and native American people live. The resulting miscarriages and birth defects have led women to take desperate measures. Cora Tucker, an African-American campaigner who can remember civil rights and has been active in the welfare rights movement, explains: "We go at it from the point of view of how it affects our children." They have been put down as "hysterical housewives", but she turns the taunt around, insisting that if men are not getting hysterical, there is something wrong with them.

Like other militant mothers, they are not exactly sitting around knitting socks and baking pies. For instance, Dolly Burwell from North Carolina has been in prison many times for protesting against contaminated soil after transformer oil was deliberately leaked down a rural road. Organising locally and thinking globally, Lois Gibbs from Love Canal, one of the first people to resist toxic dumping when her child became ill in the late 1970s, has just set up the Citizens Clearing House for Hazardous Waste to co-ordinate information internationally. They see the environment not as something apart but as "the place where you work, you live, the place you play".

IN her recent book on women in these grassroots movements, Crazy For Democracy, the American historian and feminist Temma Kaplan describes Dolly Burwell, Cora Tucker and Lois Gibbs as pathfinders. Because many poor women are facing new and extreme circumstances, some have learned fast and intensely. In seeking new ways through for themselves and their loved ones, they have reached out to others and, in the exchange, understood the urgency of creative collective resistance.

Movements interact, and people carry memories and ideas from one experience of organising to another. But wider communication is also important. These ground-floor pathfinders and their ingenious and innovative livelihood movements deserve greater visibility and consideration. They have been testing out ideas about material survival, social rights, democracy, empowerment and human dignity in hard times. They have a great deal to teach those of us who see feminism as relevant to more than a privileged minority, and indeed anyone concerned about the numbing acceptance of inequality and injustice which has left us with a society and a political system that is so manifestly out of joint.

This week's essayist, Sheila Rowbotham, has been a leading feminist thinker since the 1960s. Educated at St Hilda's College, Oxford, and London University, she is now a research fellow at Manchester University. Her books, which include Women, Resistance And Revolution (1972), and Women in Movement (1993), have helped shape the women's movement. Her latest book, A Century Of Women (Viking/Penguin), is published in June.

GUARDIAN WEEKLY
May 18 1997

Ship's crew sails into a colonial past

John Ezard

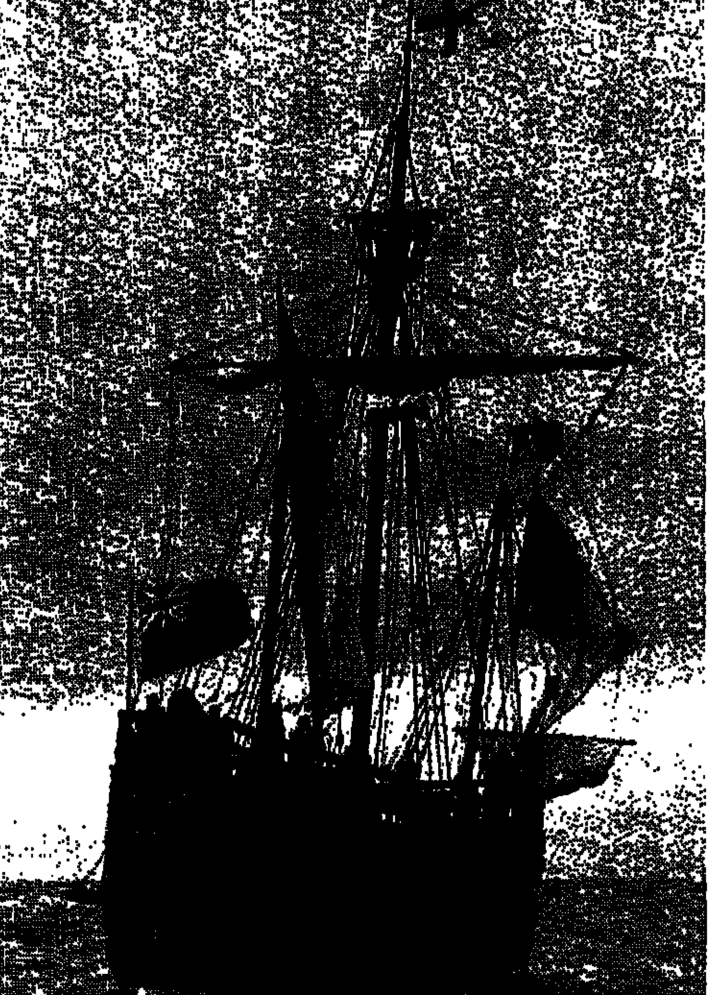
FIREWORKS turned the Clifton suspension bridge in Bristol into Niagara Falls last week as a curtainraiser for the commemoration of the voyage that gave England its first colony.

A crowd estimated at 100,000 watched as Concorde flew over the bridge. Beneath it, 18 sailors in ill-fitting, improbably clean 15th century clothes replied with cannon fire from a tiny three-masted sailing ship.

They are recreating the 3,200km journey made by the caravel Matthew across "the Sea of Darkness" — the North Atlantic — 500 years ago. Led by John Cabot with a Bristol crew, the exploit led to the annexation of Newfoundland, which only regained independence in 1949.

The $2.7 million sailing of the replica was marked by a similar mixture of commercial calculation and nautical danger. Its organisers paid Travellers $5,000 to leave the Clifton Gorge so as not to mar the celebrations.

And the new Matthew proved all too accurate a replica in its frailty. Less than 7km out from Royal Portbury Dock, it hit strong winds in the Bristol Channel. It had to drop anchor in Clevedon Bay and wait till high tide before restarting.


The Matthew setting sail on its voyage PHOTOGRAPH: BARRY BATCHELOR

Its captain, the round-the-world yachtsman David Alan-Williams, has diesel and state-of-the-art technology for emergencies. But otherwise the all-male crew is relying on canvas, muscle and basic navigation for its seven-week voyage to Bonavista, Cabot's landfall after he had discovered the then teeming cod shoals.

The Queen and the Duke of Edinburgh — who was at the helm for the replica's launch — will be in Bonavista to greet her on June 24.

Notes & Queries Joseph Harker

IT WOULD appear that both pure Ecstasy and Prozac exert their pharmacological effect on the serotonin receptor sites in the brain. Why is the former illegal and the latter widely prescribed legally?

SEROTONIN is a chemical in the brain that affects a number of things, including mood. People suffering from clinical depression have lower than average levels of serotonin in their brains. Prozac gradually restores serotonin to its proper level, then maintains that level. It has no effect on mood in people who are not suffering from depression.

Ecstasy, in contrast, releases a sudden excess or rush of serotonin, which produces an elevated mood for several hours afterwards. In fact, the massive release of serotonin may leave nerve cells depleted and cause irreversible brain damage.

Mood can be thought of as a light bulb and serotonin as the voltage that keeps it glowing. Too little voltage and it goes dim (depression). Prozac restores the voltage and brightness to normal. Ecstasy produces a blinding flash as the bulb burns out.

Finally, Prozac is a strictly controlled medicine, whereas the manufacture and sale of Ecstasy is unregulated and dangerous. — *(Dr) A Simpson, Medical Director, Eli Lilly, Basingstoke, Hampshire*

SUPPOSE, you could fool enough people into queueing around a building in a continuous loop with all of them believing they were in a normal queue. Would the queue occasionally jump forward as usual or would it do something else?

THIS would depend upon the queue's density. If the people were too close together, nobody would be able to move — just as in a traffic jam. As people became restless and moved off to find a more promising queue, others would start to move up to fill in the gaps, and once the gaps became large enough the entire queue would start to move. What happens next depends upon the degree of dullness of mind brought about by the action of queueing and the number of extra people now attracted to a moving queue.

The question assumes that every member of the queue is under the same illusion. What more often happens is that a queue forms next to, or even on both sides of, any knot of 10 or more people in a public place, hence the well-known British ice-breaker, "Is this the queue?" "I think so." —*Jonathan Brazier, Sheffield*

WHAT is the evidence for St Brendan the navigator having "sailed the Atlantic and discovered the New World" in the sixth century, as reportedly believed by a medieval linguist at the British Academy?

IN 1976, Tim Severin and a crew of four sailed across the north Atlantic in a replica of St Brendan's ox-hide covered, wooden-framed, 36-metre vessel. The route was via Scotland, the Faroes and Iceland, and landfall was made in Newfoundland. Many of the key elements of the Brendan legend in the medieval text tallied with the places and creatures seen during the voyage. This is not, of course, proof that St Brendan discovered America but it does show such a voyage was possible and deserves to be given the same significance as Heyerdahl's Kon-Tiki voyage in its context. (Source: The Brendan Voyage by T Severin, McGraw-Hill Inc, 1978.) — *Peter Sharp, Snells Beach, New Zealand*

Any answers?

I WANT to convert my flat into a fully biologically contained eco-system. How many pot plants do I need to process the carbon dioxide produced by myself and my cat? What will I need to survive? — ***Rob Lines, Harrogate, North Yorkshire***

MY friend and I are against buying Nestlé; but she has found that Nestlé appear to own all condensed milk manufacturers (including Carnation, Phenix etc). Are there any independents? — ***Alicia Hall, London***

WHICH has been the most peaceful, and the most violent, place to live in this century? — ***Shehu Dikko, Lagos, Nigeria***

Letter from Jakarta Kay Bridger

Where the future is yellow

CALLING Jakarta a city of contrasts has become a ridiculous truism. It is a 10-million-person landmark to the inhabitants' aspirations of accelerated economic development within in a 90 per cent Muslim population that doesn't want to lose any traditional or cultural ground.

Along the city's arteries a world of mirrored skyscrapers and exclusive 20-storey apartment blocks proliferates. Jakartans call these buildings *gunungs* (mountains), perhaps indicating the peasants' eye view through which they are seen. Take a lift up a few floors and look down and you see the red-tiled roofs that fill every square metre in between, liberally dotted with stainless steel-domed mosques. This is where the people live who largely cannot afford the merchandise in the monolithic, windowless nine-storey malls that dominate retail.

The diversity of people tells the same story. The main roads are choked with lopsided buses belching diesel fumes, dark-windowed sedans and a million *kijangs* (Indonesia's "people-carrier" vehicles). Office workers dressed Western-style wait along the roadside for buses. Walk for a few minutes away from the six-lane roads and you're in a *kampung*, the quieter, village-like communities where men and women in the traditional markets can be seen wearing brown batik sarongs and moving at a much slower pace.

The vast heterogeneity of Indonesia's 27 huge provinces is represented here, with miraculously few clashes. Everyone belongs — except the Chinese — because everyone is subject to the same unwritten hierarchy. This is a city of quasi-feudal communities, where each tiny area within the *kampungs* reports to a headman and most people respect their elders and betters.

Jakarta seems to operate under a system of organised anarchy, however. Driving is wild, but there are amazingly few accidents. Beggars stake out the pedestrian bridges, leaving the pavements free for street vendors. Bus travellers doze between spirited attacks from buskers and two-minute sales pitches.

FURTHER liveliness has been added to this rich stew of the streets with the upcoming general election. The supporters of the three parties, draped in the appropriate coloured flags and T-shirts, are trying to attract attention with motorcycle processions (the only way through the traffic jams). They zip around the main streets in strict daily rotation.

The other day, on the minibus, the green flag-wavers suddenly surrounded us. "It will be the turn of the yellows tomorrow," said Ika, my Indonesian colleague, "and it was the reds the day before." Although energetic, it all seems a bit formulaic. Maybe it's because their zeal is commissioned and paid for.

Each party has its colour, plus a symbol chosen from the coat of arms of the Pancasila — the state ideology of five guiding principles to maintain "Unity in Diversity" in this vast country. Supporters make a gesture of a certain number of fingers, like a masonic handshake of recognition.

A single star on a green background is accompanied by a single finger raised in support of the PPP or the Muslims' United Development party. Two fingers, plus the banyan tree of a united Indonesia surrounded by the rice and cotton of social justice and equality on yellow is the government's Golkar party. And a three-fingered salute and a bull's head on red is for the PDI or Democratic party, on whose headquarters the August riots were centred. My Indonesian colleagues have warned me to avoid wearing any of these three colours and suggested that I learn the different handshakes in order to avoid trouble should I get caught up in one of the processions.

Yellow flags predominate, of course, and the yellow processions are by far the most vocal. The irony is that the election won't replace the president nor the party in power. The future is yellow. So why all the fuss?

To Ika it is just a welcome day's holiday, since many citizens must return to their birthplace to vote. And it gives Jakarta an opportunity to adorn its main streets as if for a party.

In the *kampungs* it is business as usual as I join my neighbour outside his house to spend a few happy minutes watching his two chickens peck in the dirt. Only a few coloured flags have reached here. Is it political zeal or bunting?

A Country Diary

Ray Collier

LOCH FARR: By road the loch is only 3km from the house, and as I have been retired for some time it means I can go on to the water as the weather dictates. With temperatures dropping below freezing overnight, mid-April seems too early for trout fishing, but this is what the locals call an "early loch", in that it fishes better early in the season. I am still not clear whether this is because of the habits of the fish, or the fact that fishing is more difficult later in the year because extensive beds of aquatic plants make fly-fishing fraught with problems. Two sets of call notes dominated the background sounds all the time I was on the loch; the first was from a willow warbler and the second from a toad. The toads seemed all over the loch, indicating it must be a very large colony indeed, which is unusual in the Highlands. Loch Farr is also one of a small number of places this far north where you get both toads and frogs spawning. The boat needed a lot of bailing out, and as I eventually took grip of the heavy oars I wondered if I would be fit enough this year to row the length of the loch without stopping. By mid-morning the loch was dead calm and there were fish rising everywhere — some dimpled the water, others jumped right out and splashed back down. I have never seen so many fish rising in any of the other lochs I have fished in in the Highlands. I caught no fish until a breeze created the right ripple and the sun went in. Then I took some small but takeable fish, enough for dinner that evening. The water on the loch is controlled by a sluice, and the level was much higher than usual because the owner had commissioned an artist to do a painting of the scene, and she thought it would look better with more water.

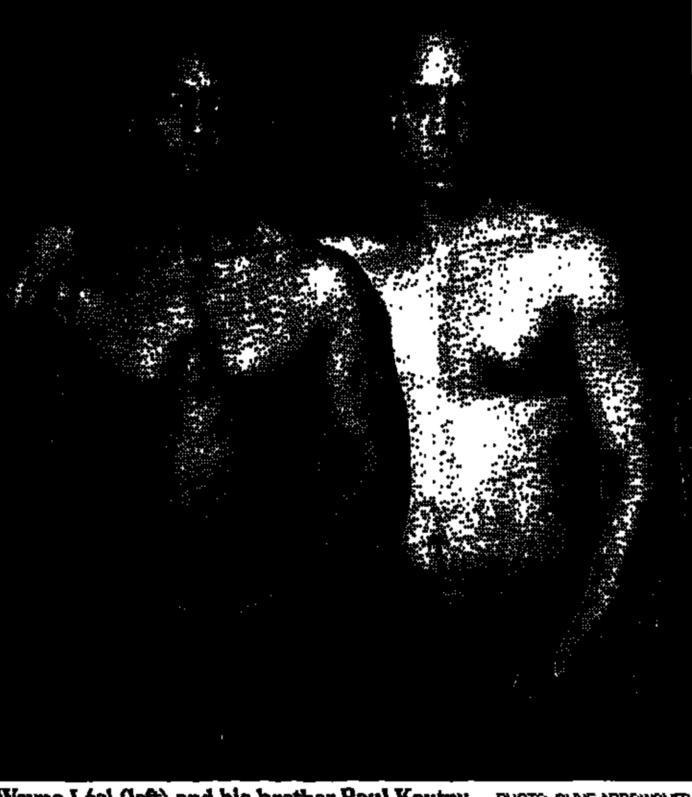
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Blood brothers apart

Sickle cell anaemia, once thought to be a black persons' disease, will affect every race within two or three generations, writes **Lulu Appleton**

THE obvious difference between brothers Wayne Léal and Paul Koutny has not had much impact on on their lives, apart from the occasional times when they've played up the particularity of their situation: in what often appears to be an arbitrary allocation of DNA, Wayne is black like their mother (who is of Afro-Caribbean origin, as is his father), while Paul appears white like his Czechoslovakian father. But there is another, more serious, aspect of their differences.

The same quirk of fate that decided which genes each brother would inherit also conspired to pass on the abnormal red blood cells that characterise sickle cell anaemia. Although neither brother suffers from the full-blown disease, a simple blood test has revealed that one of them is a carrier. The surprise is that this is Paul. "Sickle cell is always thought of as a black persons' disease, associated with African and Caribbean countries, but it can be seen in fair-haired, blue-eyed children with nothing to suggest any black ancestry," says Bernadette Modell, professor of community genetics at University College Hospital, London.


Wayne Léal (left) and his brother Paul Koutny PHOTO: CLIVE ARROWSMITH

"Not only is this blood disorder already found in white-skinned, fair-haired people in many Mediterranean countries, it is also on the increase. Sickle cell anaemia will affect every race, black and white, within two or three generations. It's the most common hereditary disease in the world; the notion that some physiological reason exists that precludes white-skinned people from having sickle cell is a myth."

For Paul Koutny, the discovery of such a "trace", which effectively makes him a carrier of sickle cell anaemia, is relatively unimportant because it does not affect his own health. However, should he decide to start a family, the presence of this gene takes on enormous significance: if his partner also carries the same "trace" there is a one in four chance of producing a sickle cell child at each conception.

As many as one in 10 Afro-Caribbeans are believed to carry the gene, and about one in 200 are born with the disease; the sickle-shaped blood cells block the flow of oxygen around the body and when the blood vessels become clogged, it causes the sufferer enormous pain which, in severe cases, can be crippling, causing organ damage, strokes and, if undiagnosed and untreated, may prove fatal.

Modell says that 20 years ago, babies born with sickle cell anaemia died without ever being diagnosed. "Today, we are seeing increasing numbers of surviving patients because the full-blown cases are being recognised earlier and treated." But the misconception that sickle cell never affects white-skinned people persists, even in some medical circles.

Modell cites a case of a fair-haired, blue-eyed young woman at Hammersmith hospital whose blood test in her sixth month of pregnancy revealed she was carrying the gene. "It was not possible to trace her ancestry. DNA analysis will show the origins of a strain but it could come from Africa, the Romans or even the Phoenicians — anywhere that contact has been made in places where the condition is indigenous.

"It is already prevalent in many Mediterranean countries like Portugal, southern Italy, Sicily, Greece, Turkey and Cyprus. It is found throughout the Middle East and is very common in Saudi Arabia, Lebanon, Syria, Iran and Iraq — particularly among the Marsh Arabs."

In Britain, it is difficult to attract funds to combat a disease which is thought to affect only a specific proportion of the population, particularly when there are competing requests for grants in areas of medicine which affect potentially larger groups of people. However, last month, a licence was granted to London's University College Hospital to carry out genetic screening for inherited diseases.

Paul Sertial, medical director of the Assisted Conception Unit, has set up Gene Aid: "The aim is to stamp out this degenerative condition and I want to drum up as much support as I can for every sickle cell sufferer and carrier to be listed on a national register, which could be used to promote greater education and awareness, as well as co-ordinate prevention and treatment."

Collis Rochester-Peart, a nurse counsellor at the South London Sickle Cell Centre, says: "All women should be screened, irrespective of ethnicity. No one should wait until she is pregnant to find out."

Jinxed by Jinnah

Suzanne Goldenberg

FIRST came Dracula, then Salman Rushdie, who is held in similar regard by some Pakistanis. If ever there were a film dogged by demons, it's the biopic of Pakistan's founding father, Mohammed Ali Jinnah, whose makers must now come up with nearly $1.5 million to finish their movie after the Islamabad government backed out of the film.

The controversy started even before the British-based makers of Jinnah, which purports to right a historic injustice done to the monocled barrister who founded Pakistan, began shooting in Karachi last month.

First, there was embarrassment over the choice of Christopher Lee, best known for his Dracula roles, to play Jinnah. Then there were the Pakistani newspaper reports — never substantiated — that Salman Rushdie, whose Satanic Verses led to widespread rioting and deaths in Pakistan, had had a secret hand in the script.

But the makers of Jinnah — a Pakistani civil servant and fellow of Selwyn college, Cambridge, Akbar Ahmed, and London's Petra Productions — are undaunted. Ahmed is curiously unmoved about the loss of the £1.5 million — roughly one-third of its original budget — pledged by the government, although his producer admits the film will be affected.

Ahmed says he expects to have no trouble in raising the extra funds, and in showing up those he accuses of plotting against the film from the beginning. "I am sorry to disappoint you, we are making a great film," Ahmed said, "You can eat your heart out." He said he expects to finish shooting this month and the film is scheduled for general release in August to coincide with the 50th anniversary of Pakistan's independence.

The casting of Christopher Lee was only one of the production problems. Newspaper columnists were so vitriolic about the narrator, Shashi Kapoor, that the portly Indian actor — a Hindu — barricaded himself in a heavily guarded hotel room. An army major sued the filmmakers for defamation of Jinnah, and some people even objected to scenes of Jinnah coughing.

Shaken by the controversy, Pakistan's government began to wonder whether this was the best way of celebrating its golden jubilee. "To put up money for a feature film would not be terribly wise," says government minister Abida Hussein, "A feature film cannot be viewed by everybody in an identical way. Jinnah is such an icon for all of us, we really don't want to controversialise him."

That is why, earlier this month, the government said it was pulling out — although it is still extending non-financial support to the project. "This is a decision arrived at through a consensus at a meeting between myself and Akbar Ahmed," said Mushahid Hussein, adviser to the government on information and culture. "It is also our belief that governments should not be in the business of making movies."

Hussein refused to be drawn on whether it would try to channel funds to the film in less overt ways — a charge that has already begun to surface in Pakistan. "Let's not get into that," he said.

But the withdrawal of government funding is unlikely to make the controversy go away. Already the Pakistani press has alleged that Shashi Kapoor is personally going to fund the rest of the film — another insult for nationalist Pakistanis.

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Huzza for a home-made hero

TELEVISION
Nancy Banks-Smith

IT IS a mystery to me how anyone can fail to admire a man whose legs start at his ear lobes, yet Sharpe seems to attract enemies effortlessly. It may, of course, be something to do with the legs.

Confronted with Ducos, an all round bad oeuf, Sharpe kicks him in the groin, stamps on his spectacles and propels him from the scene of battle with a boot up the backside. You won't believe how badly Ducos takes this. He immediately devises a cunning plot to discredit our hero.

Sharpe's superior officer, Col Wigram, believes this palpable tarradiddle because Sharpe has kicked him in the groin too, *and* shot him in the backside. "Stop your whining, Wigram. You won't die from a bullet up the bum," as a fellow officer said bluffly. Some people will moan about any little thing.

Only the fact that soccer hasn't been invented prevents you advising Sharpe to leave the army immediately and take up a more promising career as a striker with Leeds.

Women do not join this tak-tsk tendency. Sharpe never raises hand or boot to a woman, but his success is spectacular. In four years' soldiering he has been married twice — to a fiery Spanish guerrilla and an English girl with the intellect of a whippet — and is now in love with a French widow who cooks a mean coq au vin. "Beg your pardon, ma'am," he says, kicking in her bedroom door. "The door was locked."

Wrenching my attention away from Sean Bean's legs with a noise like Velcro, I must tell you that **Sharpe's Revenge** (ITV) is the beginning of the end. After two more two-hour films, the Sharpe saga will come to a natural conclusion at Waterloo, when he, so to speak, runs out of war.

I have nothing but the heartiest huzzas for this really rather brave series. Sharpe is the diametric opposite of everything TV is supposed to do most effectively: the small, the claustrophobic, the domestic, the intimate, the interior.

Television can look inside the human body at the hidden heart, but Sharpe is all exterior. It gives the impression of size. The war sweeps across Europe like a broom, brushing heaps of green- and scarlet-jacketed soldiers before it like autumn leaves. There is slaughter, slaughter everywhere, but hardly a drop of blood.

And it has a hero. Not an anti-hero, ironic and slightly foxed, but a genuine straight-up, knock-down, homemade, rough-hewn diamond. A man who can part his hair in the middle without looking a prat.

You need oomph to lead people, to be a leading man. Napoleon had it to spare. Wellington said, as wistfully as that perfectly wist-free man could, that Napoleon's appearance on the field was worth 40,000 men. When Sharpe says, "Pick up yer colours! Do up yer buttons! Foller me!", they foller.

Bernard Cornwell, who writes the Sharpe books, was enthralled as a child by Forester's Hornblower stories. Hornblower was one of Nelson's captains in the Napoleonic wars, and the influence on Sharpe is obvious. Celtic and Picture Palace, the independent producers who made Sharpe, are now making a series of Hornblower for ITV. All they need is their hero.

After Britain's first Ecstasy fatality, it seemed that the shambolic Hacienda club had little time left. But the Manchester home of acid house has survived to define a generation, says **Decca Aitkenhead**

Oh, what a night

WHEN Bernard Manning was booked to open a new Northern club in May 1982, he didn't even stay to collect his fee. He waddled on stage, declared: "I've played some right shit holes in my time, but this is really something," and walked off.

Unusually for Manning, he was right. He had indeed played some right shit holes in his time — and this club was really something. This month, the Hacienda in Manchester is celebrating its 15th birthday, an event as surprising to its founders now as it would have have sounded then to Manning. What began life as the grand conceit of a bunch of pop stars — a hulk of concrete and steel in a British clubscape of glitterballs, mirrors and stand-up comedians — has gone on to define a generation. It brought us acid house, Ecstasy and Madchester, hosted Britain's first Ecstasy gang wars and drug death, and survived the best efforts of tabloid fury and Chief Inspector James Anderton to have it shut down.

On its 15th birthday, the Hacienda remains much as it was when Manning found it so unimpressive — a great big empty space by a canal in Manchester. It is, after all, only a place where young people go to have a bit of a dance. It probably shouldn't even exist any more; 15, in club years, makes it about 110.

Yet the survival of the Hacienda is not a story of clever marketing and all those other slick ploys we have come to suppose make up a successful superclub, extracting money from grinning young fools. It is, in fact, the very opposite — a comic, shambolic muddle. By any standards of logic or business sense, the Hacienda should not only have failed to survive, but should never have been built. The 15th anniversary is a measure of what clubbing has come to mean, why it will endure, and of the strength of a country's attachment to something once thought of as "just a nightclub".

In 1982, New Order were a successful Manchester pop group with more money than they quite knew what to do with. Some of the band were keen to spend it on a synthesiser, but their manager, Rob Gratton, fancied building a club. He sort of wishes, he now deadpans, they had gone for the synthesiser.

By the time the club opened, in a disused boat showroom in a forgotten scrag of town, costs had galloped wildly out of control. It was absurdly ambitious — a vast, 1,200-capacity club punctuated with steel pillars, cat's-eyes and road safety bollards, a freak of industrial angles and factory images in an era still in thrall to chrome and fairy lights. It was open seven nights a week, designed primarily for live bands, committed to obscure American music — and it went down spectacularly badly.

"It was a total white elephant," recalls Paul Cons, promotions manager from 1986-92. The stage had been built in the wrong place, so bands couldn't build proper lighting rigs, and the acoustics were disastrous. The first time New Order ever played, they blew the sound system. Manchester was baffled, and the club was routinely empty. To have only 50 people in quite a modest, mirrored club can be forlorn; in the Hacienda, it is one of the most depressing spectacles on earth.

AS THE owners — New Order, Gratton and Tony Wilson, owner of their record label, Factory — battled to make something of the beautiful, expensive and apparently useless thing they had created, money continued to haemorrhage. Nothing ever quite came off as planned; Mike Pickering, now of M People, was events manager. "The trouble was," Gratton says, "he was so good at it, he was on to the stars before the audience was." So Frankie Goes To Hollywood, Madonna and Culture Club all played, and the public paid a couple of quid for the privilege of seeing them.

But then, in 1986, Pickering played the first House record. By 1987, Shaun Ryder, a local scally in the band Happy Mondays, had been to Ibiza and come back with a load of pills. By 1988, the Summer of Love had come to Manchester, and by the end of the decade the Hacienda had become shorthand for a cultural revolution. It had turned clubbing from something you did to get a late drink and a dance into something which consumed a generation. "When it's happening, when the Hacienda rocks," Cons shrugs, "there is nothing else like it on earth."

Rising star . . . Madonna makes her first British appearance, at the Hacienda, in 1984

And it was all a bit of an accident. "In 1987," Wilson admits, "we were wondering where the next big musical thing was coming from. So international acclaim came as quite a surprise — but they were just as ill-prepared when it all started to sour.

In 1989, a 16-year-old girl took an E in the Hacienda and died. It was an icy shock to a scene until then convinced, with a child-like faith, of its own utopia. Drug-dealing in the club was also organising itself into proper warfare, door staff were being threatened, and James Anderton and Greater Manchester Police were determined to get the place shut down. The club's response was to close voluntarily for six weeks — "just another lunatic decision," Cons recalls. It cost them a fortune, and within weeks of reopening six bouncers were stabbed in one night; police in full riot gear held all 1,500 clubbers inside until dawn.

An attempt to defuse the volatile ferment of drugs, gangs and the door by busing in bouncers from elsewhere backfired horribly. The new door staff, having no idea who was who, were more at risk than ever. DJs were getting threatened; it had, says Pickering, "turned into a monster".

The club stayed open, but while other clubs were taking the formula and building sleek lifestyle empires out of it, the Hacienda was lurching from one financial crisis to the next. Smart clubland money was on branding, merchandise and sponsorship deals, and venues like the Ministry of Sound in London were abandoning their warehouse origins for crushed velvet and frosted glass. They were installing toilet attendants to please a newly glammed-up crowd, while the Hacienda was installing airport-style metal detectors at the door. Clubland, everyone agreed, would have to smarten up its act and go commercial or die. Having started out too avant-garde for its own good, the Hacienda looked like ending up a has-been. People in London even stopped pretending they had been there. By last year the club was struggling to stay alive.

MONEY was running out. The owners, with typically lamentable timing, had bought the building outright in 1990. Having dragged a skanky part of town to the height of fashion, the Hacienda had made itself an expensive purchase; then the property market collapsed. In 1992, Factory Records went bust and there was talk of the club being sold. New Order, as Gratton points out, have not had a hit single for 15 years.

Then, last summer Cons returned to the club, having quit four years earlier in despair, to launch a new Saturday night, called Freak. Overnight, the Hacienda was once again crammed.

A massive Indie night has taken off midweek, and Fridays are about to be relaunched. As the celebrity DJ bubble is bursting, and crowds grow sick of corporate clubs which seem only to exist as a vehicle for peddling merchandise, the Hacienda is again the most respected place to be in Britain on a Saturday night.

How has it survived? Even its owners cheerfully admit their management has been naive, muddled and at times irrational. Yet it is precisely because of this — because it has never been about sound business sense — that the Hacienda is, as Cons says, "a bit like the BBC, a national institution".

"On a commercial basis, they would never even have opened it," he says, and Gratton would agree: "People talk about the crisis in 1990, but the crisis started in May '82. We never expected the gang problems, but then we never really thought it through at all. We just built it because there was nowhere else like it. To be quite honest, it's been one long bloody headache."

Wilson has the more lyrical account. "The people who've run and worked in this place believe in something special. Cultures need places, periods need to build their cathedrals. The Hacienda has been that space, a canvas on which pop culture has drawn itself. You're meant to underestimate the young, especially now with all the marketing, but revolutions come from unlikely places, and you have to provide the place for the cutting edge to take shape."

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Bringing out the French

THEATRE
Michael Billington

GOOD theatre often confirms one's prejudices; great theatre radically alters one's perceptions. And the remarkable thing about Luc Bondy's brilliant modern-dress production of **Playing With Fire**, starring Emmanuelle Béart and appearing all too briefly at Nottingham Playhouse, is that it totally re-invents Strindberg. In its lightness, wit, eroticism and aestheticism, it resembles nothing so much as an Eric Rohmer movie.

In a sense, Bondy's French-language production, which originated in Lausanne and triumphed in Paris, repays an historic debt. Strindberg's one-act, naturalistic plays (this one dates from 1892) were heavily influenced by the French.

So it is fitting that Bondy should bring out the peculiar "Frenchness" of Strindberg. The setting is a seaside holiday home, and the theme the very Rohmerish one of the tension between surface formality and simmering passion. Knut, a philandering artist, and his wife, Kerstin, are entertaining an old friend, Axel, who is in the throes of a painful divorce. While Knut goes off to bathe, Axel and Kerstin acknowledge an overwhelming mutual love that first stirred the previous summer. They confess everything to Knut; but, when he agrees to let Kerstin go as long as the two of them marry, love quickly turns to hate and Axel departs, leaving the company to settle down to a good lunch.

Bondy's genius is for combining psychological realism with visual clarity. For a start, he has an astonishing set by Richard Peduzzi: the long veranda of a white clapboard summer house, across which the light falls diagonally. It creates a perfect image of civilised escape against which the passions unfold.



Emmanuelle Béart in Playing With Fire — PHOTOGRAPH: DOUG MARKE

Bondy also implies that the sultry, storm-brewing atmosphere and the languorous boredom of seaside holidays motivate human behaviour.

Béart's hypnotic Kerstin drifts listlessly around as if aching to find something to pass the time. Later, she changes into a loose-fitting, flame-red dress, as if hoping to excite Axel's attention. And, when she does, she claws at his body like a cat on heat and finally aims flailing blows at his head when she realises he will desert her. But Béart, who proves to have as magnetic a presence on stage as on screen, subtly suggests that Kerstin will soon relapse into her habitual torpor.

Everything is low-key, quiet, conversational — as someone says, this is a world in which people "eat, sleep, wait for death". Sexual passion is also triggered by circumstance. In the case of Thierry Fortineau's excellent Axel, it is a complex mix of lust and disgust. But perhaps the most intriguing character of all is Laurent Grevill's Knut, a failed artist, who is strangely stirred by the prospect of his wife's infidelity. "It's amazing how much he loves me when you're here," Kerstin tells Axel. "Your presence seems to inflame him." And Bondy implies there is something homo-erotic about Knut's friendship with Axel: it's what René Girard calls "triangular desire", in which two men are drawn together by their urge to possess the same woman.

Bondy also brings out the quiet comedy of the situation. At one point Knut tells the dithering lovers, "We must come to some agreement, because in a few minutes the gong will go for lunch." We always think of Strindberg as quintessentially Swedish; so, in a way he was. But what Bondy's exhilarating production proves is how much he also owed to the French tradition, in which love and passion are seen as subject to the bourgeois proprieties. This is Strindberg totally redefined.

Terrence McNally has an obsession with Callas. Twelve years ago he wrote a marvellous play, The Lisbon Traviata, about a lonely opera queen and his desperate need to own a rare Callas recording. Now, in **Master Class** at the Queen's Theatre, London until July 19, he attempts to show the diva at work. The result is an unsatisfying mix of potted biography and star-vehicle.

Based on Callas's masterclasses at the Juilliard School, the play shows her putting three hapless students through their paces. Between times, Callas suffers flashbacks of a triumph at La Scala and her tormented affair with Onassis.

But what do we learn about Callas? That she believed in the supremacy of art, in the paramount importance of listening to the composer and in the need to put truth of feeling above purity of sound. Valuable insights no doubt, but hardly peculiar to Callas.

The significant thing about Master Class is that it is part of a growing attempt by drama to both incorporate and feed off classical music. Nothing wrong with that, except that you need to give the music room to breathe.

But the evening is really a showcase for a star, Patti LuPone, who does everything McNally asks of her, and rather more, with consummate skill. But is the audience applauding the highly professional LuPone or the ghostly memory of Callas? What with Marlene playing a few doors down, it struck me that London's West End is gradually filling up not just with the sound of music but with a nostalgic necrophilia.

Essence of Cuba

JAZZ
John Fordham

***IT ISN'T* easy for Ronnie Scott's to take on the qualities of a Caribbean summer evening — a shaft of sunlight is usually enough to send the staff racing for their coffins — but the Cuban bandleader Machito used to achieve the transformation in the early eighties.**

This dapper old man's shows epitomised the true music of Cuba — a mixture of exuberance and stateliness, with the excitement spilling out from the conversational frankness of the harmonies and the subtleties of the layered percussion, rather than a lot of leaping about.

These qualities were vividly recalled by the Afro-Cuban Allstars' performance at the Jazz Café. The Allstars were founded by singer-guitarist Juan de Marcos Gonzalez, a man who grew up in the sixties when western rock was dominating even Castro's youth culture, and who was determined to preserve the traditions of early Cuban jazz and salsa.

The music was a delight. The Allstars concentrate on a vocal tradition, but the succession of singers taking solos (tenor voices of restrained passion humming with vibrato), echo nothing so much as a procession of star saxophone players coming up to take their turn.

The essence of this music is a balance of fluidity and a handful of simple structural essentials — the repeated jangling piano motif, the sudden exclamatory shout of the brass, the jolt and clatter of rimshots abruptly injected into the flow of the rhythm. That's par for the course for Cuban-style bands, but the way the Allstars' singers toyed with the underlying beat in their phrasing, and the instrumentalists unfurled their forceful and quirky virtuosity, made the music spring to life.

Czech charmer triumphs over Hollywood

CINEMA
Derek Malcolm

EASTERN Europe produced some terrific films in the days when directors had to skilfully weave their way around the state censor. Yet, since the fall of Communism, the former Eastern bloc has virtually become a cinematic wasteland. The reason is clear — state subsidies dried up. This only emphasises what the great Polish director Andrzej Wajda once told me: "There's always a chance to get round political censorship. It's much more difficult to beat the censorship of money under capitalism." Which is why it is so important that Jan Sverak of the Czech Republic won the Foreign Film Oscar with Kolya this year. The film may not have been the best candidate, but it has been a record-breaking triumph at a Czech box-office otherwise crowded with Hollywood films.

Watching this story of a middle-aged Prague cellist struggling to bring up a five-year-old boy dumped on him by the Russian woman who has paid him to marry her, you can't help seeing connections with the admired Czech new wave of the sixties, which produced, among many others, the Jiri Menzel of Closely Observed Trains and Milos Forman's pre-Hollywood films, Peter And Pavla, A Blonde In Love and The Firemen's Ball.

There is the same emphasis on quirky character-drawing, almost the same political awareness — Kolya takes place during the build-up to 1989's Velvet Revolution — and a similar focus on charm, humour and sentiment.

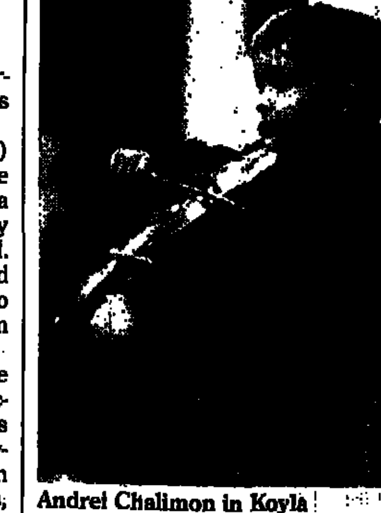
Sverak's first feature, Elementary School, was nominated for an Oscar in 1992. Since then he has honed his talents. Kolya is his surest mixture of form and content yet.

The cellist, played by Zdenek Sverak, the director's father, who also wrote the screenplay, is a lifelong womaniser who is rude to the bureaucrats who run the orchestra like everything else, and thus gets demoted to playing at funerals. His marriage to the Russian actress, who immediately decamps to Germany, enables him to pay off his debts and buy a car.

The small boy (Andrei Chalimon) makes life difficult, coming into the bedroom as he's trying to seduce a young student and talking endlessly in a language he can't understand. Slowly, the two form a bond; and when the authorities threaten to part the pair, it takes the Revolution to keep them together.

The bearded Zdenek, one of the Czech Republic's most famous actors, doesn't overplay his hand. His slow-burning style looks underpowered at first. But the longer the film progresses, the better it becomes, and the natural, unforced acting of Chalimon is a joy.

Kolya may not quite measure up to Menzel or Forman. It's a little too facile for that. But it points the way out of the morass of cruel, ironic thrillers and silly comedies with which Czech and other eastern European directors feel they have to regale their audiences now that Hollywood has arrived on their doorsteps.



Andrei Chalimon in Koyla

If you want something really silly to transport you way beyond everyday realities, I suggest Luis Llosa's Anaconda. As the title suggests, this involves an enormous snake which lurks in the Brazilian rain forests and likes human flesh when nothing else is forthcoming.

Jon Voight gets swallowed in the movie but not before giving one of the most ludicrous performances of his life as a wicked snake hunter who joins a documentary film crew looking for a lost tribe. There's anthropologist Eric Stoltz, director Jennifer Lopez, cameraman Ice Cube (don't laugh) and Jonathan Hyde as a tetchy Brit narrator. If they could make a good movie, I'll swallow a snake myself. "I thought this movie would be my big break," says Lopez at one point. "Instead, it's turned into a disaster." She can say that again.

When the Japanese film-maker, actor, writer and pop culture icon Takeshi Kitano first arrived in London with Sonatine, the film attracted every Japanese teenager in the capital as well as the critics. He was so fashionable that he believed Britain understood him better than his own country.

Then came Getting Any, a terrible comedy that almost did for him. Fortunately **Kids Return**, his new film (actually shown at Cannes last year) is far better, the most intriguing release of the week. The film is funny, tough, melancholy and tender. You're never in any doubt that Kitano knows exactly what he is doing — and he does it with considerable panache.

The art of the improbable

Mark Cocker

MESA VERDE National Park and its Anasazi cliff dwellings in southern Colorado must be among the most photographed and reproduced architectural structures in the United States. With many famous buildings — the Taj Mahal and Parthenon to name two — there is a fear that one's pre-existing familiarity with their representations will diminish enjoyment of the genuine article. But on arrival at Cliff Palace, the largest, best known of Mesa Verde's ruins, I quickly realised there was no chance of anti-climax.

It's not that these are such spectacular buildings. In fact, brick for brick Cliff Palace is relatively modest. There is no richly painted surface or marble inlay or, indeed, any dazzling artwork to command immediate attention. Many of the upper storeys of these hand-hewn stone apartments have now collapsed.

Yet, they do still have a deep intrinsic beauty. The stone itself, a 70 million-year-old Cretaceous sandstone, is a rich warm buff that induces both a feeling of calmness and gives a sense of the natural site's staggering endurance. But much of the power emanating from the ruins themselves — and not easily conveyed by photography — resides in the contrast between the complexity, even delicacy, of the buildings when set against the raw bulk of the enveloping cliff face and wider canyon. It's the sheer improbability of the pueblo's location, coupled with its obvious sophistication, that also helps you understand why the first whites ever to see it thought they'd discovered "a magnificent city".

Cliff Palace alone informs you of the Anasazi's remarkable development and it's an impression only confirmed by other artefacts on display. Their basketry and pottery, with its powerful black-on-white geometric designs, are both indicators of a rich aesthetic. The other striking element of this culture is the sheer economy of lifestyle. Almost everything that still grows at Mesa Verde was used by these prehistoric occupants. The Anasazi harvested nuts from Ponderosa pines, berries from junipers, even acorns from Gambel oaks. The very cliff-side location of the pueblos was also a response to their prior need of the land for crops, especially the "three sisters" of American agriculture — corn, beans and squash.

Despite this frugality there is strong evidence that the Anasazi were victims of their own economic success. Cliff Palace alone, with its 217 rooms and 23 ceremonial chambers, known as kivas, accommodated more than 200 people. These populations steadily depleted the natural resources, felling all the trees and exhausting the soil and surrounding game. By examination of timbers in Cliff Palace, archaeologists have also identified that in 1276, when Anasazi culture had achieved new heights, they suffered droughts lasting 23 years. By 1300, most of the cliff pueblos were abandoned and the occupants vanished thereafter as a distinct community.

Yet the Anasazi remain of critical importance to American history. In fact, in the sun cities of Phoenix and Tucson the Anasazi story should have the very deepest resonances. For these urban populations currently rely for water on natural underground aquifers, and environmentalists fear that this non-renewable "fossil" water will eventually be exhausted. This ominous scenario would give deep meaning to the words of novelist Thomas Keneally, who suggested that "America's ignorance of its true Indian history, as distinct from . . . the fatuous Indian history of the Western movie, may be a national tragedy".

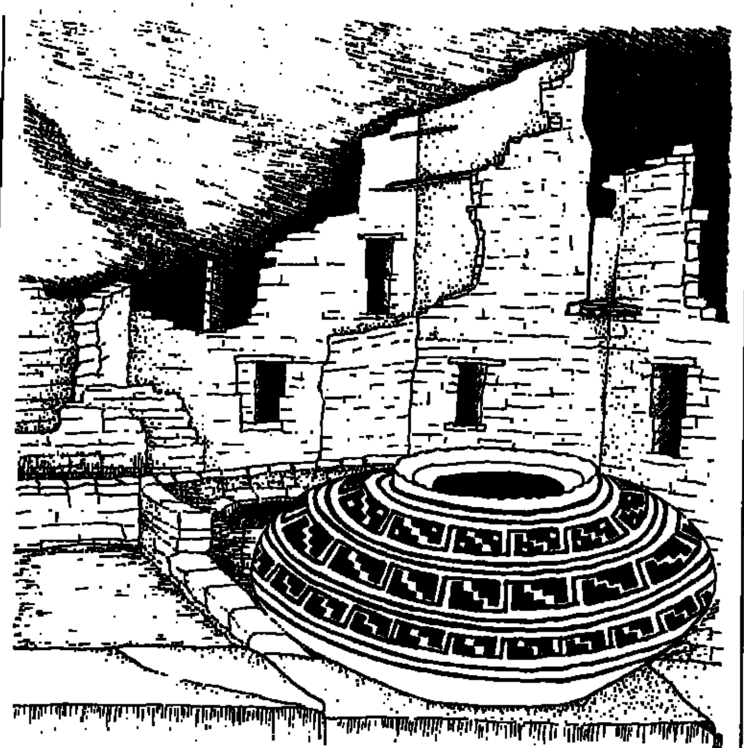


ILLUSTRATION: ANN HOBDAY

Chess Leonard Barden

EASTER once again proved Britain's most popular weekend for congress chess.

Walsall celebrated the Staffordshire Chess Association's centenary with an international tournament where Keti Arakhamia-Grant nearly scored a grandmaster result at men's level.

Meanwhile Ruth Sheldon, the 17-year-old England No 3, finished runner-up at Bolton. Sheldon has now taken the lead in both the women's and junior sections of the £3,000 Leigh Grand Prix for congress opens.

Grandmasters Lalic, Hebden and Adams lead the Grand Prix, with Hebden the best placed after his 7/7 perfect score at Southend. Lalic and Adams conceded some draws in finishing first at Walsall and Sutton, respectively.

This week's diagram shows the best Easter finish, while the game featured below is a potential bomb under the most popular of all chess openings, the Sicilian Defence.

Adams v Mah

1 e4 c5 2 Nf3 d6 3 Bc4!? Do you remember when you had just learnt the Sicilian Defence as an improving novice, and all your duff opponents refused to play the book lines with 2 Nf3 and 3 d4 but instead brought out a bishop to c4? Such early experiences can be a powerful taboo, which helps explain why in all the Batsford, Cadogan, Trends and Informator books on the Sicilian, there's scarcely a mention of 3 Bc4.

Nc6 3 Bc4 was not just a spur of the moment idea. Adams v Gelfand at Linares diverged by 3 . . . Nf6 4 d3 Nc6 5 Bb3 g6 6 c3 Bg7 7 Nbd2 0-0 8 0-0 b6 9 Re1 Ba6 10 Nf1 Nc5 11 Bc2 Nfd7 12 Bg5 h6 13 Bh4 Nxf3+ 14 Qxf3 Ne5 15 Qd1 Nc6 16 Ne3 Qd7 17 f4. White's formation is like a Bishops Opening or a slow Ruy Lopez where he gradually develops attacking momentum. Gelfand weakened his king's side by f5 18 exf5 gxf5 19 Qh5 e6 20 g4 and Adams went on to win.

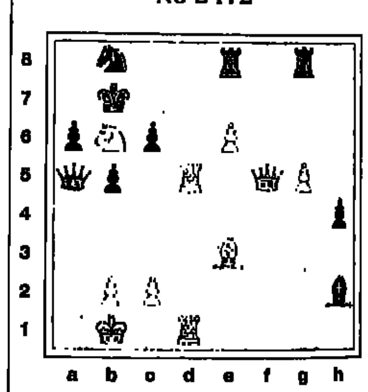
4 d3 g6 5 0-0 Bg7 6 a3 e6 7 Ba2 Nge7 8 Re1 0-0 9 Nbd2 b6 10 Nf1 Bb7 11 h4!? A typical probe to undermine solid positions.

Qc7 12 Ne3 Rad8 13 Rb1 Perhaps this explains why he preferred a3 and Ba2 to his more natural Bb3 and Bc2 against Gelfand; here White has the extra option of b2-b4.

d5 14 exd5 exd5 15 h5 Nd4 16 Nxd4 cxd4 17 Ng4 Qd6 18 Qf3 Nf5 19 Bf4 Black tried for active play, but Adams has smoothly created a typical dark square assault against the BK . . .

Qc6 20 Re2 Rde8 21 Rbe1 Rxe2 22 Rxe2 Qb5 23 Bb3 Re8 24 Rxe8+ Qxe8 25 h6 Bh8 26 Bxd5 . . . and the bishop indeed proved stronger on a2 than on c2. **Nh4 27 Qh3 Bxd5 28 Qxh4 f5 29 Nxf6+ Bxf6 30 Qxf6 Qf7 31 Qd8+ Resigns** Adams now has 3/3 with 3 Bc4; it will be some while before the first Trends booklet appears on the Adams Attack, but many stranger ideas have become enshrined in chess theory.

No 2472



Tim Wall v Robert Willmoth, Surrey Open 1997. White (to move) has a decisive attack, but how best to finish Black off?

No 2471: 1 Re1 Kd5 2 Kf4 Kd4 3 Rd6, or 1 . . . Kd4 2 Rf5 Kd3 3 Rd5.

Quick crossword no. 366

Across

1 Films, or the Film Industry (6,6)
9 Former capital of Nigeria (5)
10 Wild duck (7)
11 Excellent — French brandy (4)
12 Acute poverty (8)
14 Stink (6)
15 Supremely courageous (6)
18 Indecent (8)
20 Occupy the whole of (4)
22 Give running commentary with film (7)
23 Foreigner (5)
24 Keen on dyeing (anag) — a mechanical contrivance (6,6)

Down

2 Naive young woman (7)
3 Ornamental vessel holding flowers (4)
4 Stay (6)
5 Divided skirt (8)
6 Avoid, artfully (5)
7 Naturist settlement (6, 6)
8 Outdated (3-9)
13 Public praise (8)
16 Point of view (7)
17 Venerate (6)
19 Argentine soldier and president (5)
21 String up — drape (4)

Last week's solution

D	I	S	A	G	R	E	E		T	R	I	O
E		U		O		N		B		E		B
C	A	R	G	O		G	A	R	L	A	N	D
K		P		D		A		O		C		U
	C	A	R	T	O	G	R	A	P	H	E	R
T		S		I		E		D				A
R	E	S	U	M	E		A	C	C	E	N	T
I				E		A		A		V		E
A	N	T	A	G	O	N	I	S	T	I	C	
N		E		I		G		T		D		P
G	E	N	E	R	A	L		I	D	E	A	L
L		S		L		E		N		N		A
E	V	E	R		F	R	I	G	H	T	E	N

Bridge Zia Mahmood

THE British team to contest the 1997 European Championships will have been selected by the time you read this column. The bad news is that it won't contain Forrester and Robson, whose partnership played for the last time in the Macallan tournament back in January.

It's also possible that the championships will mark the final appearance of another of Britain's foremost pairs, Graham Kirby and John Armstrong, who announced at the end of the home international series for the Macallan Camrose that they had played their final match for England.

They received a standing ovation from their fellow players when they revealed this sad news, a fitting tribute to the regard and affection in which they are held. This is richly deserved, for as well as being excellent players, they are among the most sportsmanlike and sympathetic pairs that the game of bridge has seen.

Kirby and Armstrong's speciality over the years has been bidding and making some pretty terrible game contracts. Since the premium for successful games is so high in tournament bridge, their ability to turn mediocre hands into game swings has been an invaluable asset. If you're defending two hearts, and a careless slip means that declarer makes 10 tricks instead of nine, you can shrug your shoulders, since the swing will be a mere 1 IMP. But against Kirby and Armstrong, you won't be defending two hearts very often. You'll be defending four hearts, and now your error will cost no less than 16 IMPs to your team — the 10 that you lose for -620 against -140, as well as the six that you could have gained for being +100 instead.

East, on the deal below from the final Camrose match between England and Wales, could not cope with the pressure. North-South game, dealer North:

North
♠ Q 9 7 6 3 2
♥ K 8 7
♦ J
♣ A 6 3

West
♠ A 8 5 4
♥ 10
♦ K Q 10 9 8
♣ 10 5 2

East
♠ K 10
♥ Q J 9 5
♦ 5 4 3
♣ Q J 9 7

South
♠ J
♥ A 6 4 3 2
♦ A 7 6 2
♣ K 8 4

South	West	North	East
A'strong		Kirby	
		1♠	Pass
2♥	Pass	3♥	Pass
4♥	Pass	Pass	Pass

Twenty-two points is plenty for a typical Kirby-Amstrong game, and this one was not a bad contract. With the 4-1 heart division, though, it appeared that declarer would have to lose two hearts, a spade and a club. Armstrong had other ideas: winning the opening lead of the king of diamonds in his hand, he ruffed a diamond in dummy and led a low spade. East played the ten, and the jack forced the ace from West. A third diamond was played, ruffed by Armstrong in dummy. He led a spade and ruffed East's king, then played a heart to the king. Declarer was now in a position simply to lead winning spades from the dummy — East could ruff in, but only with his natural trump tricks while Armstrong threw his minor suit losers at leisure. To defeat the contract, East had to play the king of spades on the first round of the suit!

Would you have found that play? I hope not, because it would have spoiled the last appearance of one of Britain's great partnerships. ©

Low-life lyricism

William Fiennes

Out of Sight
by Elmore Leonard
Penguin 296pp £6.99

FORTY-EIGHT-year-old Jack Foley is in prison for robbing more banks "than anyone in the computer", has an ex-wife in Miami working as an assistant to a magician called Emil the Amazing, and remains supernaturally attractive to beautiful young women of far greater prospects than he.

Foley is, in other words, an Elmore Leonard hero: another low-grade Florida criminal, hard-boiled but soft-centred, with the familiar Leonard pathology of "wanting to be a good guy" and the familiar Leonard cool of a con who breaks out of prison just in time to watch the Super Bowl. Out Of Sight is Leonard's 33rd novel, and it's business as usual.

Foley is picked up outside the prison walls by his old partner, Buddy, and an aspiring hotshot called Glenn "Studs" Michaels. But he had not reckoned on the arrival of US Marshal Karen Sisco, the latest in Leonard's long line of sassy professional women (often known as "broads") who invariably wind up in bed with his protagonist. Even her father — a private investigator, naturally — describes Karen as "the tough babe".

She smokes. She wears medium heels and black Chanel suits. And in the trunk of her car, she keeps a pistol, a ballistic vest, several sets of handcuffs and leg irons, an expandable baton, a can of Mace and a Remington pump-action shotgun. Karen seems to have got the hang of the whole empowerment thing.

The tough babe gets mixed up in the escape and soon finds herself locked in the trunk of Buddy's car with Foley. The two of them do the obvious thing in such circumstances, which is to discuss the films of Faye Dunaway. After the convicts have ditched Karen, Foley can't get her out of his head. She's a little smitten, too, taken in by the nonchalant charm of a thief who, before asking the cashier to hand over the money, would say something such as: "I sure like your hair, Irene. Is that the latest style?" Or, "Mmmmm, your perfume sure smells nice. What's it called?"

Foley and Buddy head for Miami. Karen is determined to bring them in. Glenn heads for Detroit to meet Maurice "Snoopy" Miller and rob the home of Wall Street scammer Richard "Dick the Ripper" Ripley. Leonard fans will by now be experiencing a certain amount of déjà vu. He has experimented in the past (as in 1987's Touch, an eerie account of a faith healer), but Out Of Sight is generic Leonard, strictly on home turf. It's another tale of minor-league crooks set against a backdrop of Miami kitsch.

Leonard's romanticism has always coexisted uneasily with some truly nasty violence. Here, Foley's affair with Karen is pure male fantasy, perilously close to schmaltz. But Maurice's brother Kenneth, "wired on crystal meth", is a serial rapist and murderer whose acts are too brutal for Leonard's characteristic rosy glow. Leonard loves guns, but he makes light of what guns do, indulging instead a fetishist's enthusiasm for their associated terminology.

You can see why Quentin Tarantino loves Elmore Leonard. He is about to start filming Leonard's novel Rum Punch, but no movie has yet caught the nimble, hipster's rhythm that his fleet pages require. Leonard's novels read like screenplays-in-waiting, and film, not literature, is the tradition they repeatedly acknowledge. Out Of Sight alludes not only to Faye Dunaway, but to Stranger Than Paradise, Steve McQueen prison pictures, Woody Allen's Take The Money And Run, Repo Man, Kiss Me Deadly and Pulp Fiction.

Film may be able to capture Leonard's heists, weapons and smart lines. But it won't catch the zero-gravity float of his third-person narration, which drifts in and out of the characters' interior monologues, as if to pick up the tempo of their thinking. And for all his movie sensibility, Leonard's novels are full of a chanced-upon verbal lyricism, like the names of the card tricks Adele can do — "The Hindu shuffle, the overhand shuffle, the doubt lift, the glide . . ."

It has been fashionable to make big claims for Leonard, as if these books have the vast empathy, perception and inventiveness of, say, Saul Bellow. Out Of Sight is a novel that Leonard has written several times before under different titles.

You don't read it so much as breathe it in, like a gas. And the memory of it evaporates almost the instant you lay it down. But it's a lot of fun while it lasts.

'The Rooster' . . . Clive Arrowsmith's contribution to the 1992 Pirelli calendar.

Something for the office wall

Linda Grant

The Pirelli Calendars Complete
ed by Italo Zannier and Guido Vergani
Thames and Hudson 407pp £45

LET us pay homage to that which has spent its life ". . . expressing tokens of varying import that document the cultural history of man's relationship with his natural habitat and with the manmade environment structured by sociological and technological progress." And you thought the Pirelli calendar was a lot of birds in wet bikinis on the beach.

The Pirelli calendar is a lost icon of the swinging sixties, as symbolic as James Bond films and the E-type Jaguar. Britain had just discovered the package holiday, and the most popular item in the Green Shield stamps catalogue was the bathroom scales — to show whether you could fit into your Marks & Spencer bikini.

To the people who bought it, the calendar was supposedly little short of high art, a 20th century version of the artistic classical nudes of Alma-Tadema. But the businessmen who ordered it always hung it on the office wall, not in their own living rooms next to the print of Constable's The Hay Wain.

Pirelli was not the first vehicle company to offer its customers a pin-up calendar. In 1949 British Leyland gave its lorry drivers one, with a snap of the then-unknown Marilyn Monroe. By 1963 Pirelli was able to offer its reps their very own lovelies surrounded by bicycle inner tubes and foam-rubber seat padding. The following year the Pirelli calendar as we know it today was born.

The 1964 calendar was shot in Mallorca: in "homage" (according to Pirelli) to the 19th century's terminus for the Grand Tour.

Of course, by 1964 Mallorca had become the first stop for unlimited nooky for Britain's working classes. In these first shots, the body is photographed in sections, like a butcher's diagram. Men of the era will instantly recognise the girl in the unbuttoned denim shirt putting her hand inside on her breast and smiling up. After the posed, air-brushed beach beauties of the fifties, these women must have looked refreshingly natural, young, and above all accessible.

By Pirelli's own admission 1971 was a watershed year: they had to take account of the women's movement, which was waking up to the idea of pornography as subjugation. So: long shots of women walking on the beach, long skirts, bodies in shadow.

In 1974 they went for broke in the most explicitly sexual of all the calendars, all the models looking at the camera with open mouths. It was as close as Pirelli would come to mass-market pornography. A year later the calendar was defunct, killed off not by feminism but the oil crises and the long campaign of terrorism in Italy.

After a decade-long absence, it was relaunched in 1988 with an insistence that the tyre treadmark be integral to each picture. But by now the ideals of Pirelli had been integrated into mainstream fashion photography. You can find its like in Vogue or Vanity Fair any month. Pirelli claims that it brought avant-garde art to the masses, that its remit was always "a serene hypothesis of tranquillising beauty" — though those who bought it did so in search of genital excitement, not serenity.

What it never achieved was to move beyond the image of women as objects — except for one black-and-white picture from the 1996 calendar, in which Eva Herzigova sits smoking a cigarette on a rail line in a cracked and parched desert. She looks like a woman fulfilled, absorbed in her own thoughts, smiling slightly. It is as beautiful as a Roman or Greek antiquity and as timeless.

If Pirelli really wanted to be revolutionary it would create a calendar for the rising female executive — but it will have its work cut out if it enters the unexplored territory of what women want to look at, rather than how they want to be seen.

The comedy of capitalism

Andrew Rosenheim

Downsize This! Random Threats from an Unarmed American
by Michael Moore
Boxtree 278pp £9.99

THE essentially leftwing roots of American populist politics have recently been overshadowed by rightwing events — the emergence of militia movements, the débâcle at Waco, the bombing of a federal government building in Oklahoma. Michael Moore is a refreshing throwback to earlier, more progressive days, when being a socialist in midwest America was no more remarkable than being a cheer-leader.

Moore shares none of the extreme right wing's near-hysterical hatred of the federal government; in fact, he sees it as a protector, if not always an effective one, of the poor, the unprivileged, and the unpopular. His animus is focused on the manifest corporatisation of the United States, the unfettered power of multinationals to run roughshod over local interests and local lives.

Best known as a film-maker (especially for his feature-length indictment of General Motors, Roger & Me), in Downsize This! Moore wields a broad, sometimes bitter satirical pen.

As a leftwing satirist, he is something of a novelty in American letters. Moore's rightwing counterparts — P.J. O'Rourke, Christopher Buckley, R Emmett Tyrell — are in the enviable position of mocking what is progressive and new; the sillier edicts of political correctness and the puritanism of the anti-smoking brigade make soft and easy targets.

Downsize This! is altogether harsher, finding in the grotesque disparities between rich and poor in America an enduring reason for savage indignation.

Curiously, Downsize This! is most interesting when its author is most fanciful. As a polemicist, Moore wears his anger heavily: his outrage, while heartfelt, eventually wears thin. He has to tread a particularly fine line, moreover, between his progressive instincts and the conclusions some of his arguments lead to — in particular, his anger at the exportation of so many American-based jobs to the cheaper climes of the Third World has him verging on an economic form of nationalism that he detests when it is expressed in racial or political terms.

Where Moore does score is in a few absolutely inspired conceits. Posing as a concerned citizen, for example, Moore tries to have Representative Robert Dornan of Orange County committed, arguing with deadpan logic to the necessary authorities that Dornan's unstable public behaviour — "He rants like a mad dog on the floor of the House about 'homos' and a 'disloyal, betraying little Jew' " — requires hospitalisation.

Downsize This! is very much a mixed bag, not helped by clear evidence that many of its pieces were originally given as talks. Yet there is such pungency to Moore's unfashionably anti-corporatist views, that when they are coupled with his comedy at its most creative, the results are both memorable and well worth seeking out.

Balkan folie des grandeurs

Victoria Clark

The Serbs: History, Myth and the Destruction of Yugoslavia
by Tim Judah
Yale 368pp £19.95

Croatia: The Rebirth of a Nation
by Marcus Tanner
Yale 352pp £19.95

FOR some people the past is not another country, but ever-present and never moved on from. Most of the Balkan races are like that, but the Serbs and Croats are champions in a crowded field.

In late 1991, the Serb boss of Belgrade's Saatchi and Saatchi operation, sitting in his black-and-chrome skyscraper office, slipped into the future tense to tell me that "We Serbs will fight until there is one Serb standing under a plum tree." In a seminary close by Zagreb's Catholic cathedral, a callow student priest insisted that the Croats were defending western Christendom against the barbarous east.

A year later, as the guns pounded Sarajevo, a Bosnian Serb academic confided over a cup of tea that 20,000, 30,000, 50,000 lives was a reasonable price to pay for the independence Bosnian Serbs had fought 14 wars for over the centuries.

Anyone trying to make sense of such declarations needs more than a nodding acquaintance with the histories of Serbia and Croatia. They need a key, some code books, to work out why most of Yugoslavia was laid waste and pitted with mass graves by 1995.

At last we have some code books. The Serbs: History, Myth And The Destruction Of Yugoslavia, by Tim Judah, who was the Belgrade correspondent for the Times and the Economist for most of the war, and Croatia: The Rebirth Of A Nation, by Marcus Tanner, who was the same for the Independent for even longer, chart the histories of peoples too traumatised by their unhappy pasts to live without historical delusions.

By exploding their most cherished myths, the books do Serbs and Croats a favour they may not appreciate. The Serbs do not always, as they have claimed for centuries, stand and fight. "When defeat looms . . . they run," Judah finds. Tanner reminds Croats that their heady love affair with central Europe is a recent thing: their Hungarian and Austrian overlords treated them like dirt until they broke free of Austria-Hungary in 1918.

The books have nice matching covers, their authors are good friends and they both write well, but they have handled the stories very differently. Judah has the sexier story to tell — more blood and guts, more absurd grotesquerie, plus a pantomime cast of crazed academics and mafia war lords. The Serbs' story lends itself well to his thematic treatment. A straight history could not begin to account for the way that Milosevic was able to convince his people that they were the victims of the war and their cause was just; we need to understand how the Serbian Orthodox Church's presentation of their military defeat by the Turks at Kosovo in 1389 (yes, 1389) as a spiritual victory has permanently warped the nation's psyche.

We begin to see how the Serbs, who have never got over the loss of their empire and count themselves "a heavenly people", could get carried away with their self-image as the big boys on the Balkan block. Judah's eyewitness accounts of the war are a bonus.

Tanner keeps his distance, but his straight chronological history of this rag-tag country's millennium-long struggle for independence is in parts compelling. He weaves a tragic tale of a people wedded, long before the Serbs, to the idea of a south Slav state. He also demonstrates that the Croats were never natural Nazis; it was fascist Mussolini, his eye trained on the prize of Croatia's Dalmatian coast, who hauled Ante Pavelic out of an obscure exile and foisted him on the unenthusiastic Croats.

Tanner reserves his contempt for President Franjo Tudjman who, with his hints about wanting to fish Pavelic out of his Spanish grave and bring him home to Croatia for a state funeral, is still living in a myth-distorted past.

The Serbs, by comparison, have been showing some signs of a willingness to grow up at last. Milosevic's failure to deliver on his promises, along with some blatant cheating, brought them out on the streets at the end of last year.

But six months later, Presidents Milosevic and Tudjman are still there in their capitals. The past is ever-present still, and no one's moving on in any hurry.

Swing low, sweet driver

Alan Rusbridger

Golf Dreams
by John Updike
Hamish Hamilton 201pp £13.99

MY FAVOURITE **book on golf is one entitled The Physics Of Golf, in which a professor at a Midwest university in America attempts to help amateur hackers improve their game by reference to the basic laws of aerodynamics, kinetics and torque.**

There are sections on viscous drag, spin axis, the D Plane, Collision Theory, the logarithmic swing-weight scale, and an in-depth analysis of Harry Vardon's stroke ("His angle of bending the lower arm had a zero angular velocity at the beginning of the downswing . . . it is not recommended for short irons"). The reader is invited to consider the momentum vector just before the club head meets the ball, which may be handily summarised as $MV = MW + mU \cos \phi$.

You may laugh. But there are moments in any amateur golfer's life when he will feverishly turn to such stuff in the early hours in search of the clue that has so far escaped him. He will already have read any number of "straight" books, as well as hundreds of magazine articles. He will have watched instruction videos late into the night and worked through the extensive psychological literature. The Physics Of Golf will be as useless to him as all the other books, tapes and films, but that will not stop him. He is in the grip of a hopeless obsession.

Help is now at hand. Our would-be, never-will-be, Tiger Woodses can put aside the dreary didactic canon and settle down instead with this little collection of John Updike's essays, Golf Dreams. The cover picture is instantly reassuring. It shows the author in the middle of a swing which surely defies any laws of physics, geometry, physiology or even gravity. We can sink into the writing happy in the knowledge that we are in the hands of a fellow duffer.

Read this book in vain for "tips". There are only two — one on putting and one on chipping — which the impatient will find on page 17. This is a book on the "why" of golf rather than the "how". It is about the philosophy of the game rather than the physics. As Updike says, employing an appropriately scientific metaphor: "The difficulty is, all swing thoughts decay, like radium." The first essay — seven pages of instruction on how to drink a cup of tea, written after the style of a golf manual — makes the point eloquently. It is, as he says elsewhere, useless trying to over-analyse the golf swing: "It is a web of small articles of faith, all of which strain common sense." Updike goes rather for the characterology and the morality of the game. He is very good on the small dilemmas of golf. He is sentimental about the camaraderie of golf. He is witty about golf on television. He is caustic about the trend in golf-course architecture and positively withering about other golfers — particularly slow, earnest, fat ones and "networking young bucks in their electric chariots".

There are further essays on golf in literature and golf as religion. It is, as Updike says, a sport which translates well into words.

Every golfer will recognise himself or herself in these pages. They are unlikely to play any better for having read it, but they will find it a richer game. "Is life too short for golf?" one essay asks. To which Updike replies crisply: "As soon say life is too short for sleep." All golfers — be they a Tiger or a Tigger — will know what he means.



Tiger, Tiger . . . what immortal hand or eye, can frame thy fearful symmetry?

Golf Dreams is available at a special discount price of £10.99 from Books @ The Guardian Weekly

Paperback reviews Nicholas Lezard

Samuel Taylor Coleridge: The Complete Poems, ed William Keach (Penguin Classics, £11)

THE latest addition to the Penguin English Poets series has been a long time in coming: next year sees the bicentenary of the composition of "The Rime of the Ancyent Marinere". That we can now refer to the earlier version of the poem as well as the one (of 1834, usually) we are more likely to know, just shows how underserved we have been by previous editions. Both versions are included here, along with a note referring us to Empson's point connecting "the power of neurotic guilt in the poem to disguised anxieties about European maritime exploitation and the slave trade".

Putting together a complete edition of Coleridge's poems has been difficult because of Coleridge's habit of continual textual revision, each succeeding version being regarded as definitive by the author. As to whether you will enjoy a new edition of Coleridge — that is, reading the poems rather than having them on your shelf to show how well-read you intend to be one day — you can always try reciting his "To Fortune: on Buying a Ticket in the Irish Lottery" on Wednesday and Saturday evenings ("Promptress of unnumber'd sighs, / O snatch that circling bandage from thine eyes!").

Jack Kerouac: Angelheaded Hipster, by Steve Turner (Bloomsbury, £10.99)

THIS is a comprehensively illustrated biography of the man of whose outpourings Truman Capote once wrote, "that's not writing, that's typing". Not only is the use of so many photographs appropriate to the subject (for those who love Jack Kerouac do not often love or understand the written word), but the typeface is, too — it's a fake typewriter font. I suppose if you're hip to the beat, daddy-o, you'll love it. I'm not and I don't.

The Sacred Wood: Essays on Poetry and Criticism, by T S Eliot (Faber, £8.99)

THE book may have been reset, but it still doesn't have an index, so you have to read it all the way through. You will be the wiser for it. You may be surprised to see the supposedly élitist Eliot state that "it is a perpetual heresy of English culture to believe that only the first-order mind, the Genius, the Great Man, matters"; and delighted to read that "a literary critic should have no emotions except those immediately provoked by a work of art", or his characterisation of Blake's poetry as possessing "a peculiar honesty, which, in a world too frightened to be honest, is peculiarly terrifying".

The World According to Mike Leigh, by Michael Coveney (HarperCollins, £6.99)

IT IS worrying, like the discovery of a new kind of autism, that there are people out there who do not like Mike Leigh's work. Coveney dresses them down in this critical biography, but you feel this is unnecessary; the correct reaction is to found a charity or a hospice for them. Anyway, this, while being almost embarrassingly hagiographical at times, is the best means we have of gaining insights into the mind of our greatest living filmmaker.

Orange Prize shortlist

THE shortlist for the £30,000 Orange Prize for women writers of fiction, announced last week, includes Canadians Margaret Atwood (Alias Grace) and Anne Michaels (Fugitive Pieces); Americans E Annie Proulx (Accordion Crimes) and Jane Mendelsohn (I Was Amelia Earhart), Irish writer Deidre Maddon (One By One In The Darkness) and Scottish writer Manda Scott (Hen's Teeth).

The winner will be announced on June 4.— *Dan Glaister*

Autopsy of Englishness

Chris Petit

The Untouchable
by John Banville
Picador 407pp £15.99

DISSECTING English characteristics of deceit and betrayal — the Blunts, Philbys, Burgesses and so on, many of whom end up nailed here in fictional form — John Banville locates their impulse not in any grand theorising but in a peculiarly English need for amusement and a corresponding fear of boredom.

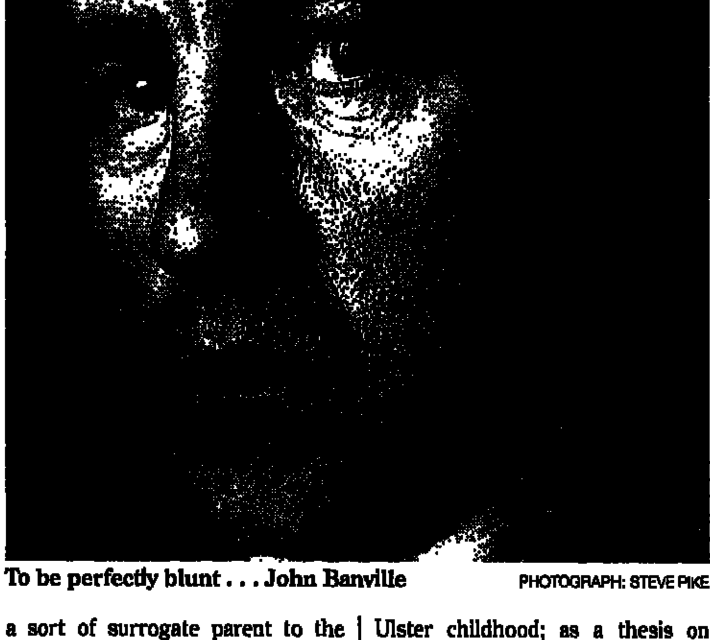
In one sense, The Untouchable is about dressing up, life as a continuation of childhood charades. Victor Maskell — Banville's Blunt, whose exposure and retrospective memoirs form the spine of the story — faces the press in his disgrace, and confides how great acting lay at the heart of his dissembling, plus the ability to dress the part to perfection: "old but good houndstooth jacket, Jermyn Street shirt and Charvet tie — red, just to be mischievous — corduroy slacks, socks the colour and texture of porridge, the pair of scuffed brothel creepers I had not worn in thirty years. Might just have come up from a weekend at Cliveden."

The Untouchable is an autopsy on a certain kind of Englishness, performed notably by an Irishman unstinting in his use of the scalpel. Although it's hard to separate Banville's voice from that of Maskell, one senses a tinge of envy for the subject being dissected, for that English certainty about what — rather than who — one is, and the capacities for supreme selfishness and disingenuous behaviour that turn the world into an adventure story.

Banville, like Maskell, sets out to distinguish between form and content in English life. Given so much class dressing, much remains hidden and in need of explanation. As a guide to the nuances of the upper reaches of the system — with its casual anti-Semitism and irony gone to seed — this is faultless. Maskell, in his privileged position as curator of the monarch's pictures, tries to tell his Moscow masters that he has not penetrated the very seat of power, as they believe, but is merely witness to the after-dinner games of a sort of surrogate parent to the nation, and not one to be taken seriously. More vital penetration goes on elsewhere, of and by the lower orders. The Untouchable is also about English homosexuality of a particular period — and, suggests Banville, fun was to be had. The fifties were "the last great age of queerdom". Boy Bannister, based on Guy Burgess and Banville's liveliest character — "Boy had a touch of the Kit Marlowes about him" — is an essay on its own on bad behaviour: dissembling on an epic scale while managing to be heroically indiscreet and buggering everything in sight.

Most accounts of English betrayal identify the double life and leave it at that. Banville reckons it quadruple and even quintuple, the attraction being that in the midst of such uncertainty, "you are never required to *be yourself*." Given such a stifled background, deceit is seen to be a perhaps excusable response to ennui; that and humour — this can also be very funny in a refined, cruelly off-hand and exclusive English manner. ("It's Cliveden actually.") A mark of the novel's greatness is that it can be approached from many angles: as an impeccable act of ventriloquism; as a treatise on art history; as a socio-political novel with fine sections on wartime London and an Ulster childhood; as a thesis on camp and stoicism. It is also very good at identifying sources of family shame and capable of amusing side-swipes — in T S Eliot's "camel-eyed gaze" is seen the mark of a lifelong, obsessive dissembler — as well as great viciousness. If the book has a villain it is Querell, second-rate novelist and spy, an "incorrigible hetero", always smelling faintly of sex and whose "fascination with women ran almost to the level of the gynaecological" — who, as likely as not, had his head between some woman's legs half an hour before kissing the Pope's ring.

In the world that lies behind appearances, Querell is exposed as that worst thing of all, a fraud. Querell is clearly Graham Greene, who once crossed Banville over the awarding of a literary prize, and much mischief is had at the dead man's expense. Unlike Blunt, Maskell, though homosexual too, is married and has children, a marriage clearly taken from Greene's own. As a gleeful hatchet job and act of cold revenge it is quite breathtaking, Sicilian even, while serving to illustrate a greater purpose. In his dismantling of the class system — an ostensibly powerful, but in fact rather rickety edifice — Banville identifies what the English were best at all along: smut and secrecy.



To be perfectly blunt . . . John Banville PHOTOGRAPH: STEVE PIKE

What ifs of history

David Horspool

Virtual History: Alternatives and Counterfactuals
ed by Niall Ferguson
Picador 548pp £20

IT HAS been argued that, if a Geneva gatekeeper had kept better hours on March 14, 1728, the French Revolution might never have happened. By deserting his post early, the gatekeeper shut out the apprentice Jean-Jacques Rousseau, who, rather than risk incurring the wrath of his master, left the city, subsequently writing the works which were to provide the intellectual inspiration for the Jacobin cause. Rousseau himself thought that, had he managed to return home that night, "after living a life obscure and simple, but even and gentle, I should have died peacefully in the midst of my own people."

Historians have traditionally objected to such fantasies, often for good reason. We have trouble enough discovering what did happen in the past; so debating what might have happened in different circumstances is a waste of time. Moreover great events happen for many reasons: to isolate one is to distort our interpretation of the past. But Niall Ferguson points out, in his sweeping introduction to the collection of alternative histories that he has edited, that the usual reason historians neglect the ifs of history is that they take an overly deterministic view of the past.

By focusing on plausible past alternatives — that is, considering alternatives which people of the time thought possible (and often more likely than what did happen) — Ferguson and his contributors show how contingency is the most crucial characteristic of the past. In doing this, they inevitably come up against some very powerful myths. Indeed, the most illuminating aspect of this book is the way in which it demonstrates the fragility of some of our most cherished notions of the past.

Among "myth-histories", none is stronger than the United States' perception of the causes of the American Revolution. Yet, in the most closely argued contribution, J C D Clark shows how unlikely the War of Independence seemed to contemporaries on both sides, and how easily events could have taken a different course. Most obviously, the new duties which sparked armed resistance came close to being repealed; but the most marked feature of nearly all protest (with the exception of that by the newly arrived Thomas Paine) against the British was the strong expression it contained of loyalty to the Crown.

The idea that the American Revolution was the natural reaction to colonial oppression was superimposed after the events themselves. To those who lived in the years before the Revolution, including the Founding Fathers, independence was not a likelihood, or even a goal.

If this seems too Anglophile to be true, the balance of the volume is righted by Andrew Roberts's consideration of a Nazi Britain, an eventuality which has mostly fascinated novelists, from Len Deighton to Robert Harris. Roberts rejects the John Charmley-Alan Clark proposal that Britain might have signed a treaty with Hitler in 1940, showing how, even if the British leadership had been able to countenance such a move, Hitler could hardly have been trusted to keep to it. He would merely have been able to save the invasion of Britain until he felt able to concentrate more resources on it.

Kennedy and Gorbachev are two heroic figures who are cut down to size by the counterfactual approach. In a contribution which shows a little too much distaste for her subject, Diane Kunz convinces us that, had he lived, in Vietnam "it would have been all the way with JFK", while Mark Almond reflects on the collapse of communism not as some built-in obsolescence of the system, but as the bungling of a leader who thought he could revitalise the Soviet Union by relaxing restraint, and was encouraged every step of the way by Western leaders.

The emergence of the more brutal nationalisms of the post-communist world was, perhaps, no more predictable than the fall of the system which suppressed them. If this book teaches us anything, it is that no war or peace should be seen as inevitable.

Counterfactuals can be valuable as more than entertainment if they remind us that the past was once the future — and that we predict any sequence of events at our peril.

Monkey business

Ra Page

Great Apes
by Will Self
Bloomsbury 404pp £14.99

WHEN **Simon Dykes, a painter, wakes up one morning to find himself in a parallel world where chimpanzees are the evolutionarily successful species, he naturally assumes his sanity has succumbed to the routine punishments of low-grade cocaine; especially as he too seems to have the body of a sentient chimp, with chimp skills and an equally promising career in the chimp version of London's art world.**

The simian civilisation he finds himself in differs only slightly from ours, principally in its sexual make-up. The family is replaced by polygamous social groups, coyness by reproductive obligation, and intimacy by public debauchery — all of which invite a hypocritical Victorian disdain from the reader.

Having made its point — that evolutionary superiority is a matter of luck and not grounds for species-centred ethics — the book knuckles down to what the author is best at: straightforward monkey business. The new civilisation is, needless to say, a forest of comic inversions, a world where "you can kiss my arse" is a formal greeting, and where children are considered "abused" if they are sexually neglected by their group's dominant male, or "alpha".

To reprise the satirical emphasis of his first collection of short stories, The Quantity Theory Of Insanity (1991), Self digs up a simian version of its most ludicrous character, Dr Zack Busner, to act as Dykes's psychiatrist and rehabilitator.

Busner is an insidious, self-styled natural philosopher who conflates psychiatry, psychology, Freudianism, Marxism and even Logical Positivism, thereby exposing both himself and his creator for what they really are: fun-loving pranksters.

Having said this, Self is a unique stylist. His rhetorical sheen and idiomatic perversions make him one of the first literary sensualists of the MTV generation. Not entirely concerned with the long-term benefits of a cogent narrative, Self's wizardry is in the detail — visual delicacies ranging from images of fornicating clergymen to culinary metaphors for amniotic fluid and lines of copulation in Oxford Circus.

The plot of Great Apes does stall a little, suggesting that the short story might still be the author's ideal format. But it is certainly in fiction that Self's mischief has full rein. Concerned readers will hope that he sees his recent eviction from journalism as a chance to indulge himself full-time.

On May 17 Ruud Gullit, the world-class Dutch player, will lead out Chelsea in the FA Cup final. But as manager he has another goal besides the trophy: to prove a point to those in his homeland who dismissed him as an ego in boots. **Jim White** reports

The king of cool

JUST before a recent match at Stamford Bridge, London home of Chelsea FC, a press photographer, bored perhaps by the on-pitch cavortings of a man dressed in an outsized lion costume, trained his lens on a couple of rows of seats in the main stand. The resulting picture, published in Total Football magazine, made instructive viewing.

There, in the middle of it, sitting just behind Terry Venables, was Tony Blair. A couple of seats to his left was David Mellor (remember him?). And wasn't that Dickie Attenborough, just along from Chelsea's chairman Ken Bates? In the world of photo opportunities, a match at Stamford Bridge is clearly the place to be spotted.

This is the same football club which, for most of its success-free recent history, has been poised on the brink of bankruptcy. Not the kind of thing the important would want to be associated with. But then those were the days before Ruud Gullit.

In a town thought to be at the cusp of hip, in a sport never reckoned so chic, Gullit is the catalyst who has made Chelsea the club of choice for the fashion-conscious; you aren't, for instance, elbowed out of your seat by Patsy Kensit at Brentford. Gullit has made Chelsea swing again. Not only has he made them a persuasive team, not only has he brought players to the place capable of doing things with a football previously considered impossible in London SW12, his very presence lends the club a hint of sophistication.

Odd then, that back home in Holland Gullit is dismissed as a cantankerous trouble-maker, an inveterate stirrer, an ego out of control. "Since Chelsea got to the FA Cup final I've been asked by five different Dutch newspapers and magazines to explain what is it with the English and Gullit," says Simon Kuper, author of the seminal Football Against The Enemy, a writer fluent in Dutch and football. "They just don't get it. They figure it must be a joke."

So what is it about Ruud and the English? Does a foreign accent merely disguise hidden shallows? Or is he the real thing, and thus a prophet without honour in his own homeland?

The truth is that Gullit arrived in England with a bit of a reputation. He was wonderfully successful over a 15-year playing career with Feyenoord, Milan and Holland. Probably the best player of his generation, on the pitch he seemed to be everywhere with his great spray of dreadlocked hair, turning up in attack to score match-winning goals and then in defence to execute pinpoint tackles. And he used to smile a lot when he was playing. Which was odd, because his time with all three employers had been punctuated by disputes and sulks.

In his home country he was known as the man who rowed incessantly with managers, who was in a state of constant battle with teammates, who absented himself permanently from the national team when it became clear the side was not to be fashioned around him. Although savvy to his skill, the fans tired of his tantrums; the nation never forgave him for messing up their chances of retaining the European Championship in 1992 by fomenting discontent in the dressing room.

Moreover, cynics in the English game assumed that when manager Glenn Hoddle bought him to play for Chelsea in 1995, he was just another trophy signing. His talent was on the wane, punctured by injury; the bargain seemed to be that he would put a few bums on Stamford Bridge seats in exchange for a bootload of cash and a lucrative move back home. It's called doing a Klinsmann. "He's here on a bus ride," said Wimbledon's Vinnie Jones at the time. "He will just go round, see the sights and say thank you very much."

Coasting, however, is not in Gullit's nature: whatever the relaxed demeanour, he plays to win. One of his many barneys with the Dutch national team, for instance, was prompted by his distaste for the laissez-faire attitude of the younger squad members. And in his early days in Feyenoord, when he was just becoming recognised as the sharpest Dutch player since his mentor Johann Cruyff, a young apprentice put the ball through his legs in training, to take the piss. Gullit reportedly smacked the lad in the mouth. He doesn't like messing.

Even if it was to be a short stay, then, Gullit wanted to make his mark at Chelsea. He quickly ingratiated himself into the dressing room by telling filthy jokes. The other players liked that in him: sure he was a star, but he wasn't stuck up. Besides, on the pitch he played brilliantly, oozing verve and skill and versatility, transforming the team. "It was like an 18-year-old playing in a game of 12-year-olds," said his manager after one particularly glorious performance.

His presence seemed to lift the younger English players around him: Eddie Newton, Frank Sinclair and Michael Duberry suddenly looked a different class altogether when they were receiving his passes. You could tell the lads had taken to him for they soon gave him a nickname: Big Nose. As in Big John Wayne, there was nothing derogatory in the adjective. It was a mark of respect, a symbol of the scale of the man.

There was something else about the reception he received that pleased him. As with Eric Cantona at Manchester United, another footballer who takes himself seriously, Gullit found the lads quite happy not to get in the way of his ego, to let him be the one who called the shots. He found no rival in the Chelsea dressing room, no Baresi or Maldini to politic against him. In England players are too busy choreographing their goal celebrations or popping Deep Heat in each other's jock straps ("You've got to have a laugh, incha?") to plot and scheme. Anyway the lads thought he was worth listening to.

When it comes to foreigners, English footballers are suffused with an odd combination of arrogance and inferiority. Of course they can't get stuck in like we do, they haven't got the bottle for a wet Monday in Hartlepool, but, give them their due, they know about tactics. And Gullit had played with Milan, captained Holland, won the lot: you've got to have respect for his views on the overlapping wing-back.

"He's very intelligent, amusing and laid back," says BBC Sport's Niall Sloane, the man who first put Gullit on British television screens as a match pundit. "He comes across as very worldly, very wise." Just right as an idol for the newly gentrified game.

IT WASN'T just bandwagon jumpers who took to him. The die-hards in the Chelsea crowd loved him too. At the end of Gullit's first season at Stamford Bridge, Hoddle departed for the England job. The strong likelihood was that George Graham, the Scots disciplinarian, would replace him as manager. In the stands those who had seen a chink of light in the football Gullit played didn't want to see that smothered by the master of the bore draw. At the last game of the 1995-96 season, as the players made their traditional end-of-year lap of honour, the entire ground united to sing: "You can stick George Graham up your arse." And, showing they were not merely being negative: "Ruud Gullit's blue and white army." Those who were there swear they saw in Gullit's eyes the germ of an idea forming.

Ken Bates was clearly on the same wavelength. When the chairman offered him Hoddle's job, Gullit accepted. Though there were to be conditions — lots of money to buy the players he wanted, no involvement in the day-to-day drudgery generally plopped into the in-tray of managers of British football clubs — here was a chance at last to fashion a side according to his own ideas. He would prove to his detractors that his way was the right way after all.

Armed with a cheque book supplied by Matthew Harding, Chelsea's late vice-chairman, Gullit went shopping. With excellent knowledge of the Continental game, he bought wisely, as with the Frenchman Franc Lebeouf. But the signings which showed he really meant business were those of Gianluca Vialli, Roberto Di Matteo and Gianfranco Zola. For the first time current Italian internationals were brought to England, plucked from the strongest league in the world.

They came, in part, because of the money. They came too because of the promise of living in London. But they mainly came because of Gullit. His charisma — according to one Italian observer, he carried himself in Italy like a character in a Fellini film — sold them on being part of the action. For Chelsea fans, to find themselves watching world-class players was astonishing: no wonder they thought Gullit a divine intervention. And though at times he could look sneeringly superior as he sat on the touchline, chewing his rosary beads and rolling his eyes heavenwards in exasperation, Chelsea became a brighter, more innovative, more . . . well, Continental, team under his stewardship.

One thing the newcomers found was that unlike Bryan Robson, his rival big spender up at Middlesbrough, Gullit would not become a hostage to his new star signings' celebrity. He let them know they were lucky to be playing for him, not the other way round. None of them could guarantee a place in his team. "The thing about Ruudy is it doesn't bother him who he upsets," says Craig Burley, the Chelsea defender. "He's launched everyone at some point." That included Denis Wise, who, to indicate the demarcation lines were now different, was forcibly told by Gullit to stop calling him "Big Nose" in public. ("We call him the Boss now," says Frank Sinclair, another defender.) Most critically, it also included Vialli. Midway through this season, Gullit found that, in Mark Hughes, he had a better player than the Italian in the same position. He didn't hesitate to drop his big name (and old friend). The fall-out in the dressing room — with Vialli smarting from his humiliation — soured to the point where few could see how Chelsea would pull themselves together and win their FA Cup semi-final.

As it happened, it all turned out for the good. Chelsea won and Vialli and Gullit ostentatiously hugged on the touchline at the match's end.

Afterwards, in the press conference, a perma-relaxed Gullit declared that rows are good for fostering team spirit, they clear the air. Besides, it gives players something to prove if they are dropped. The English football press accepted this analysis: Gullit was presented as the master of tactical nous. How he must have loved that. It made a real change for him to be regarded as a thinker rather than the compulsive arguer he had been cast as for so long.

Given in England the platform, the adoration, the undisputed acceptance that he is special that he has always craved, Gullit has blossomed. He is happy. Even his sometimes tortuous private life (he has an ex-wife, an ex-long-term lover and several children living across the Continent) has settled. He is now in a steady relationship with Johann Cruyff's 19-year-old niece Estelle.

Back in Holland, however, public opinion remains unconvinced: the consensus is that Gullit is not as clever as he thinks he is. Critics point out that his aphorisms which so entertain the British ear ("You win the league by beating the small teams, not the big ones", or "There is no need to be as holy as the Pope") are merely those Cruyff has used for the past 15 years. And, even if he has made Chelsea a better team, Gullit was starting from a low base. When he has won what Cruyff did as a manager, then they might take notice.

On Saturday, when he leads his team out for the FA Cup final, Gullit will be looking to prove his countrymen wrong by plotting the tactics which will land the oldest trophy in world football. He needn't worry about his new fellow citizens: we will all be too busy admiring the tailoring.

Football

Rangers on cloud nine

Patrick Glenn

RANGERS last week secured the 1-0 win that gave them their ninth successive championship to equal Celtic's record between 1966-74, releasing their supporters from the shackles of doubt that had immobilised them since their defeat by Motherwell three days earlier.

Against Dundee United Brian Laudrup scored the early goal which eased the pressure but Paul Gascoigne deserved his ovation on a night when he paraded the full range of his talents.

As well as being the most potent force in Scottish football, Rangers have been the season's great kidologists. They were at it again recently, faltering like jaded steeplechasers and giving the impression that the obstacles between them and another triumph would not be negotiated.

But they went to Tannadice and easily dealt with a side who had beaten them in their previous two meetings. Those defeats had stoked the possibility of Rangers being usurped after a lengthy term in government but there was never the slightest danger of Dundee United repeating the dose. Laudrup scored after only 11 minutes but Gascoigne turned out to be the main man.

It was a pity that one moment of virtuosity in the second half did not bring the goal it merited. Gordon Durie's cross from the right had been handled by the United defender Steven Pressley, but the referee allowed the advantage as the ball ran to Gascoigne. A little burst with that famous tiptoeing gait took him to the edge of the area and his low right-foot shot snaked past the goalkeeper Sieb Dykstra, thudded against a post and away to safety.

A goal then would have been meaningless in terms of the result or the championship, but it would been an apposite return for Gascoigne's contribution. Laudrup, the most significant influence over the course of the season — Gascoigne having missed 14 weeks from January — was, however, an appropriate scorer.

His bulleted header to the right of Dykstra after receiving an impeccable cross from the midfielder Charlie Miller on the left put an end to any idea that Rangers' retention of the title would not be determined until the last day of the season.



Down and out . . . Middlesbrough manager Bryan Robson consoles Brazilian forward Juninho after his equalising goal failed to save the team from relegation from the Premiership PHOTO: CLIVE BRUNSKILL

Title glory for United

Paul Weaver at Old Trafford

CORONATIONS are always less compelling than accessions but Sunday's crowning of Manchester United, as Premiership champions for the fourth time in five years, felt as routinely anticlimactic as the reading of National Lottery numbers.

They had won the title last week, with two matches to spare when other results went in their favour, and on Sunday, when the Reds beat West Ham 2-0 at Old Trafford, the appearance of Denis Law and of Ken Doherty, the world snooker champion and ardent United fan, inspired louder cheers than anything seen by way of football.

As the final whistle sounded and celebrations began at their ground, a plane droned overhead trailing a banner that said "MUFC Carling Champions Again". The players then paraded as the trophy was presented before the delirious supporters.

Long after the end of the match the majority of the 55,249 crowd were still chanting in the stands, and the first team were not the only champions on view; there was a trophy for the reserves and for the A and B teams for winning the Lancashire League First and Second Divisions.

The homage had started at noon with the unveiling of a supporters' tribute to Sir Matt Busby, and shortly before the kick-off Eric Cantona was presented with the Sir Matt Busby Player of the Year Award. That was for the 1995-96 season; the trophy was not ready in time 12 months ago. He would not have won it this year.

United's performance on Sunday cannot be too strongly criticised in the circumstances. They went ahead after 12 minutes when a shot from Paul Scholes appeared to have crossed the line but the goal was awarded to Ole Solskjaer who followed up with a close-range header. West Ham had their chances to equalise, particularly in the 44th minute when Hugo Porfirio headed over. Even more opportunities followed after half-time when Iain Dowie and Steve Lomas found openings in the 55th minute, and four minutes later Lomas drew a particularly athletic save from Peter Schmeichel.

However, the substitute Jordi Cruyff made sure for the champions after 83 minutes when he converted Cantona's cross. All the King Cantona flags were unfurled.

Alex Ferguson was named Manager of the Year after United's title victory. A Premiership spokesman said: "He has constantly fulfilled the dream of United fans all over the world." Ferguson will receive a trophy and a cheque for £7,500.

Football results and final league tables

FA CARLING PREMIERSHIP Aston Villa 1 Southampton 0; Blackburn Rovers 2 Leicester City 4; Derby County 1 Arsenal 3; Everton 1 Chelsea 2; Leeds United 1 Middlesbrough 1; Manchester 2 West Ham United 0; Newcastle United 5 Nottingham Forest 0; Sheffield Wed 1 Liverpool 1; Tottenham Hotspur 1 Coventry City 2; Wimbledon 1 Sunderland 0.

NATIONWIDE LEAGUE First Division Play-offs semi-final, first leg: C Palace 3 Wolves 1; Sheff Utd 1 Ipswich 1.

Second Division Play-offs semi-final, first leg: Bristol C 1 Brentford 2; Crewe 2 Luton 1.

Third Division Play-offs semi-final, first leg: Cardiff 0 Northampton 1; Chester 0 Swansea 0.

SCOTTISH LEAGUE Premier Division Celtic 3 Dundee Utd 0; Hearts 3 Rangers 1; Kilmarnock 1 Aberdeen 1; Motherwell 2 Dunfermline 2; Raith 1 Hibernian 1.

First Division Airdrie 0 St Johnstn 1; Dundee 4 Stirling A 2; Falkirk 3 Morton 0; St Mirren 2 Partick 0.

Second Division Berwick 0 Ayr 2; Brechin 0 Dumbarton 3; Hamilton 0 Livingston 0; Queen of Sth 0 Clyde 1; Stranraer 2 Stenhsmr 1.

Third Division Alloa 1 Inverness 0; Cowdnbth 0 Albion 0; E.Stirling 3 Arbroath 0; Forfar 4 Queens Pk 0; Ross Co 3 Montrose 1.

FA Carling Premiership

	P	W	D	L	F	A	Pts
Man Utd	38	21	12	5	76	44	75
Newcastle	38	19	11	8	73	40	68
Arsenal	38	19	11	8	62	32	68
Liverpool	38	19	11	8	62	37	68
Aston Villa	38	17	10	11	47	34	61
Chelsea	38	16	11	11	58	55	59
Sheff Wed	38	14	15	9	50	51	57
Wimbledon	38	15	11	12	49	46	56
Leicester	38	12	11	15	46	54	47
Tottenham	38	13	7	18	44	51	46
Leeds	38	11	13	14	28	38	46
Derby	38	11	13	14	45	58	46
Blackburn	38	9	15	14	42	43	42
West Ham	38	10	12	16	39	48	42
Everton	38	10	12	16	44	57	42
Southampton	38	10	11	17	50	56	41
Coventry	38	9	14	15	38	54	41
Sunderland	38	10	10	18	35	53	40
Middlesbrough	38	10	12	16	51	60	39
Nottm Forest	38	6	16	16	31	59	34

Nationwide League, Division One

	P	W	D	L	F	A	Pts
Bolton	46	28	14	4	100	53	98
Barnsley	46	22	14	10	76	55	80
Wolverhampton	46	22	10	14	68	51	76
Ipswich	46	20	14	12	68	50	74
Sheff Utd	46	20	13	13	75	52	73
Crystal Palace	46	19	14	13	78	48	71
Portsmouth	46	20	8	18	59	53	68
Port Vale	46	17	16	13	58	55	67
QPR	46	18	12	16	64	60	66
Birmingham	46	17	15	14	52	48	66
Tranmere	46	17	14	15	63	56	65
Stoke	46	18	10	18	51	57	64
Norwich	46	17	12	17	63	68	63
Man City	46	17	10	19	59	60	61
Charlton	46	16	11	19	52	66	59
West Brom	46	14	15	17	68	72	57
Oxford Utd	46	16	9	21	64	68	57
Reading	46	15	12	19	58	67	57
Swindon	46	15	9	22	52	71	54
Huddersfield	46	13	15	18	48	61	54
Bradford	46	12	12	22	47	72	48
Grimsby	46	11	13	22	60	81	46
Oldham	46	10	13	23	51	66	43
Southend	46	8	15	23	42	86	39

Division Two

	P	W	D	L	F	A	Pts
Bury	46	24	12	10	62	38	84
Stockport	46	23	13	10	59	41	82
Luton	46	21	15	10	71	45	78
Brentford	46	20	14	12	56	43	74
Bristol City	46	21	10	15	69	51	73
Crewe	46	22	7	17	56	47	73
Blackpool	46	18	15	13	60	47	69
Wrexham	46	17	18	11	54	50	69
Burnley	46	19	11	16	71	55	68
Chesterfield	46	18	14	14	42	39	68
Gillingham	46	19	10	17	60	59	67
Walsall	46	19	10	17	54	53	67
Watford	46	16	19	11	45	38	67
Millwall	46	16	13	17	50	55	61
Preston	46	18	7	21	49	55	61
Bournemouth	46	15	15	16	43	45	60
Bristol Rovers	46	15	11	20	47	50	56
Wycombe	46	15	10	21	51	56	55
Plymouth	46	12	18	16	47	58	54
York	46	13	13	20	47	68	52
Peterborough	46	11	14	21	55	73	47
Shrewsbury	46	11	13	22	49	74	46
Rotherham	46	7	14	25	39	70	35
Notts County	46	7	14	25	33	59	35

Division Three

	P	W	D	L	F	A	Pts
Wigan	46	26	9	11	84	51	87
Fulham	46	25	12	9	72	38	87
Carlisle	46	24	12	10	67	44	84
Northampton	46	20	12	14	67	44	72
Swansea	46	21	8	17	62	58	71
Chester	46	18	16	12	55	43	70
Cardiff	46	20	9	17	56	54	69
Colchester	46	17	17	12	62	51	68
Lincoln	46	18	12	16	70	69	66
Cambridge Utd	46	18	11	17	53	59	65
Mansfield	46	16	16	14	47	45	64
Scarborough	46	16	15	15	65	68	63
Scunthorpe	46	18	9	19	59	62	63
Rochdale	46	14	16	16	58	58	58
Barnet	46	14	16	16	46	51	58
Leyton Orient	46	15	12	19	50	58	57
Hull	46	13	18	15	44	50	57
Darlington	46	14	10	22	64	78	52
Doncaster	46	14	10	22	52	66	52
Hartlepool	46	14	9	23	53	66	51
Torquay	46	13	11	22	46	62	50
Exeter	46	12	12	22	48	73	48
Brighton	46	13	10	23	53	70	47
*Hereford	46	11	14	21	50	65	47

*Macclesfield replace Hereford

Bell's Scottish League, Premier Division

	P	W	D	L	F	A	Pts
Rangers	36	25	5	6	85	33	80
Celtic	36	23	6	7	78	32	75
Dundee Utd	36	17	9	10	46	33	60
Hearts	36	14	10	12	46	43	52
Dunfermline	36	12	9	15	52	65	45
Aberdeen	36	10	14	12	45	54	44
Kilmarnock	36	11	6	19	41	61	39
Motherwell	36	9	11	16	44	55	38
Hibernian	36	9	11	16	38	55	38
Raith	36	6	7	23	29	73	25

Division One

	P	W	D	L	F	A	Pts
St Johnstone	36	24	8	4	74	23	80
Airdrie	36	15	15	6	56	34	60
Dundee	36	15	13	8	47	33	58
St Mirren	36	17	7	12	48	41	58
Falkirk	36	15	9	12	42	39	54
Partick	36	12	12	12	49	48	48
Stirling	36	12	10	14	54	61	46
Greenock Morton	36	12	9	15	42	41	45
Clydebank	36	7	7	22	31	59	28
East Fife	36	2	8	26	28	92	14

Division Two

	P	W	D	L	F	A	Pts
Ayr	36	23	8	5	61	33	77
Hamilton	36	22	8	6	75	28	74
Livingston	36	18	10	8	56	38	64
Clyde	36	14	10	12	42	39	52
Queen of South	36	13	8	15	55	57	47
Stenhousemuir	36	11	11	14	49	43	44
Brechin	36	10	11	15	36	49	41
Stranraer	36	9	9	18	29	51	36
Dumbarton	36	9	8	19	44	66	35
Berwick	36	4	11	21	32	75	23

Division Three

	P	W	D	L	F	A	Pts
Inverness CT	36	23	7	6	70	37	76
Forfar	36	19	10	7	74	45	67
Ross County	36	20	7	9	58	41	67
Alloa	36	16	7	13	50	47	55
Albion	36	13	10	13	50	47	49
Montrose	36	12	7	17	46	62	43
Cowdenbeath	36	10	9	17	38	51	39
Queen's Park	36	9	9	18	46	59	36
East Stirling	36	8	9	19	36	58	33
Arbroath	36	6	13	17	31	52	31

Sports Diary Shiv Sharma

Early success for Gloucestershire

GLOUCESTERSHIRE claimed the first win of this season's Britannic Assurance County Championship when they beat Hampshire by six wickets at Bristol.

On a slow pitch Hampshire made 316 in their first innings. Gloucestershire replied with 403 and then dismissed the visitors for 145. Needing 59 for victory, the home side reached the target for the loss of four wickets. The match saw Gloucestershire and former England bowler David Lawrence make his comeback in first-class cricket five years after his kneecap split during a Test against New Zealand.

Durham, without a championship victory since 1995, came close to ending their drought when they had Nottinghamshire on the rack at Hartlepool. The visitors were only 39 runs ahead at 200 for six in their second innings when an early afternoon downpour caused play to be abandoned. Durham, led by Australian David Boon, dismissed Nottinghamshire for 170 in their first innings and made 331 in reply. Only Tim Robinson offered any resistance in Nottinghamshire's second innings with a gritty 69.

MARK WAUGH smashed 116 runs off 66 balls as Australia warmed up for the Ashes Tour with an easy victory over a Rest of the World XI in Hong Kong. In the last match before the trip to Britain, Waugh plundered nine sixes and 11 fours in his innings. Australia, chasing 245 in 40 overs, reached the target off just 28. Sanjay Mangrekar was the top scorer with 80 for the World XI. Rohan Gavaskar, son of Indian Test legend Sunil, made 51.

BERNHARD LANGER of Germany notched up his second golfing success in a week when he won the Benson & Hedges International at The Oxfordshire. The victory, coupled with his triumph in the Italian Open, took his earnings to £194,557 this month, virtually securing his place in the Ryder Cup team.

COLIN McRAE produced a sensational last stage in his Subaru to snatch a dramatic victory in the Corsica Rally. The Scot started the final day lying in fourth place, and closed the gap on the leader to seven seconds with one stage to go. The 1995 world champion made up 15 seconds in the final burst in the mountainous region to finish eight seconds ahead of Spain's Carlos Sainz of Spain with Gilles Panizzi of France third. McRae is now second, behind Tommi Makinen of Finland, in the FIA world championship.

STUART PEARCE ended his five-month managerial career at Nottingham Forest after they were relegated to First Division so that he can concentrate on his playing career with his club and England. The 35-year-old left-back stood down on Sunday after the final game against Newcastle United, leaving Dave Bassett to take control of team affairs.

Arsenal manager Arsene Wenger beat off interest from Newcastle United, Manchester United, Liverpool and Sheffield Wednesday when he signed Luton Town's central defender Matthew Upson for £1 million. Upson is currently in the England Under-18 squad.

BRIAN LAUDRUP has been named Scotland's Player of the Year for the second time in three seasons. The Dane was awarded the accolade by the Scottish Football Writers' Association after helping Rangers to win their ninth successive championship. He becomes the first foreigner to win the award twice.

STEVE ROBINSON, from Cardiff, retained his World Boxing Organisation Inter-Continental featherweight title when he knocked out Julio Cesar Sanchez-Leon of Mexico in the seventh round at Mansfield.